Friday December 8 1995

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

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Review

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Voice of the century

Richard Williams on Sinatra

What's gone wrong at Poundbury?

Charles and the dream that died

Deyan Sudjic on fogeys and follies

German axis snubs Major

Leaders agree on EU fast lane

Ian Traynor in Baden-Baden and Paul Webster in Paris

GERMANY and France last night launched a joint drive for fast-track European integration, proposing that faint-hearts and Eurosceptics be allowed opt-outs that would leave European Union enthusiasts to push ahead on their own towards political union.

"Temporary difficulties of a partner in keeping up must not impair the Union's capacity to act and its opportunities for progress," Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Jacques Chirac said, in a pointed reference to John Major's government.

Seizing the initiative, the two men issued an open letter before next week's EU summit in Madrid aimed at banishing suspicions that Europe's central alliance was in trouble.

Although Mr Kohl denied this would lead to a "hardcore Europe" — saying, "We don't want to exclude anyone" — the Franco-German initiative poses a clear challenge to Britain before the next election: sign up for closer integration, or be relegated.

The two presidents committed themselves to a single European currency before the end of the century, and more common European foreign, security and interior policies.

Referring to next year's review of the Maastrich treat on European union, the letter said: "Because of experiences hitherto, we consider it desirable and possible to insert a general clause in the treaty giving countries who want to and are able to the chance to strengthen co-operation."

Earlier in the day in the Bonn parliament, Mr Kohl outlined his new pick'n'mix model of European integration, arguing that variable groups of EU members should be able to opt in and out of differing policy areas.

"It must not and cannot be that — France and Germany see this similarly — the slowest ship determines the pace of the convoy. If certain partners are neither willing nor able to join in specific integration moves, the others should not be prevented from going forward," he said.

With a huge political crisis at home and grave doubts about the social cost to France of the European project, President Chirac took a gamble yesterday. He was nonetheless at pains to stress that the austerity policies that have brought hundreds of thousands of French on to the streets in protest had not been forced on him by his keenness to qualify for a single European currency.

While Mr Chirac met Mr Kohl in Baden-Baden, a top-level revolt in his government's ruling party, the Gaullist RPR, was surfacing in Paris, with critics demanding delay in the European single currency.

The two leading Gaullist anti-Maastricht campaigners, Charles Pasqua and Philippe Séguin, who won nearly half the votes in the 1993 referendum, boycotted an RPR executive meeting called to support the beleaguered prime minister, Alain Juppé. The former premier, Edouard Balladur, also boycotted the meeting.

Desperate attempts were being made yesterday by Mr Juppé to find a formula to end two weeks of strikes which public sector workers are joining in growing numbers.

The Franco-German proposals, which are anathema to the British government, aim to strengthen common EU foreign and security policies, intensify co-operation on interior policy, and improve the union's capacity to act — probably by insisting on the greater use of majority voting and abandoning the national veto — and more authority for the European parliament.

"We want to make clear our common engagement for European unification and acquaint our partners with some basic ideas on the aims of the inter-governmental conference," said Mr Kohl. And the problems confronting both leaders in their scheme to move towards a federal Europe are writ large in the mass unrest that Mr Chirac left behind. His troubles have partly been caused by his eagerness to meet the German conditions for a single currency by the beginning of 1998 and the spending cuts his government is trying to enforce.

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The Princess of Wales leaving the Savoy Theatre after her controversial speech yesterday PHOTOGRAPH:DYLAN MARTINEZ

'Political' Diana upsets Tories

Major on defensive after princess rues 'wasted lives' of homeless

Edward Pilkington

THE Princess of Wales yesterday put John Major on to the defensive over the politically sensitive issue of homelessness, in her first set speech since she launched her bid for an independent "ambassadorial" status.

The princess inflamed backbench Conservative opinion in an address to the annual meeting of the homeless charity, Centrepoint. She spoke in emotive terms about the "wasted lives" of young homeless people and said teenagers were being forced into begging and prostitution in order to survive.

Patrick Cormack, Tory MP for Staffordshire South, told ITN that the princess had shown a lack of judgment. "Either she is very badly advised or she doesn't take advice."

Anthony Steen, Tory MP for South Hams, said that by agreeing to appear on the same platform as Jack Straw, the shadow home secretary, the princess had shown "how vulnerable she is to the influence of those who want to exploit her unique position for party political ends".

Buckingham Palace played down the suggestion that the princess had strayed into political waters, saying the engagement, at London's Savoy Theatre, was arranged several months ago. But the impression of a rift between the princess and the Government was heightened when the Prime Minister was forced in the Commons to defend the Government's housing policy. He said there had been a "remarkable reduction" in the number of people sleeping rough.

Princess Diana's speech is likely to have been guided by Centrepoint, of which she is patron. She is also known to have received help with speeches from Peter Settelen, a former Coronation Street actor.

Princess Diana said society must ensure young people were given the chance they deserved. "I have listened to many young people whose lives have been blighted by their experiences."

Teenagers aged 16 and 17 were forced to resort to begging, "or worse prostitution to get money in order to eat". She said young people were attacked in the street and faced the "indifferent stares of passers-by who have no idea how brave they are or how much they have suffered.

"It is truly tragic to see the total waste of so many young lives — of so much potential. We, as part of society, must ensure that young people, who are our future, are given the chance they deserve."

A speech focusing on such a political hot potato is bound to be interpreted as a provocative gesture, two days after the Prime Minister's weekly audience with the Queen at which they are believed to have discussed the princess's demand for an ambassadorial role abroad.

Some Tory MPs expressed anger at the princess's decision to appear alongside Mr Straw.

Neil Hamilton, former minister at the Department of Trade, said: "She was very ill-advised. Jack Straw used it as a political platform to attack the Government."

Mr Straw pointed out that the Queen had opened Centrepoint's Drury Lane project in central London in July and that the guest of honour at the charity's previous annual meeting was Michael Howard, the Home Secretary.

Bel Littlejohn, page 9

Top surgeon quits over waiting list

Chris Mihill
Medical Correspondent

A SURGEON running one of the most efficient and cheapest neurosurgery departments in the country has resigned because he has been told to artifically create waiting lists, it is revealed today.

Christopher Adams, who was chief of the department of neurological surgery at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, for 20 years, says he was told "to introduce a waiting list of at least three months for patients with sciatica [trapped spinal nerve], despite evidence that early treatment of such patients produces a better recovery in terms of return to work".

Last year the unit treated 2,500 patients, a figure which had been steadily rising for more than 20 years. In 1972 600 patients were treated.

David Wilson, chief executive of Radcliffe Infirmary, said last night that the waiting list for sciatica patients had been forced on the hospital by purchasing authorities who said they did not have the money to pay for speedy treatment, so the hospital should find a way to make patients wait.

Purchasers make annual contracts with hospitals fixing the number of patients to be treated. If the number is reached before the end of the financial year, either no more patients can be treated or the provider hospital has to provide treatment without payment.

Mr Adams says in an article in the British Medical Journal: "The waiting list solves nothing; it just delays the inevitable time that hard decisions have to be made — quite apart from the effect it has on patients."

He adds: "Is it really sensible in financial terms, let alone morally, to create a population of unemployed people in chronic pain who could otherwise be relieved of pain and returned to work?"

Christopher Adams . . . told to make patients wait

In addition, Mr Adams says treatment standards at the unit had become dangerous and staff morale had plummeted because of the gruelling workload.

Last year the unit had 36 adult beds, four intensive care beds and 1.5 operating theatres. According to standards laid down by the Society of British Neurological Surgeons, the minimum for safe surgery for a unit treating 2,500 patients should be 80 beds, 10 additional intensive care beds and three operating theatres.

In some cases, Mr Adams says, patients having brain surgery, who would normally be kept in the unit, were having to be treated as day patients and sent to recover in other hospitals.

Mr Adams says the health service changes meant a rush to win patients at the lowest cost, but the money generated had not been invested in extra facilities for the department. As more and more patients were attracted the only way to treat them was to give them shorter and shorter stays.

Mr Wilson admitted that in the past the neurosurgery unit had been significantly under-resourced in terms of beds, operating theatre ses-

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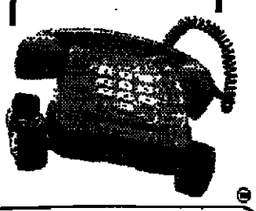

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NOT AVAILABLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Wheelie-bins rolled out as safety menace for Yorkshire pensioners who break with clean traditions

Martin Wainwright

NORTHERN hospitals coping with the double threats of meningitis and flu are now facing a new epidemic — the fracture menace of household wheelie-bins.

The jumbo-sized containers have combined, dramatically, with the local housewives' tradition of keeping everything like a new pin, to create a health hazard in the Yorkshire town of Pontefract.

"Over the last three months, nurses have noticed a significant rise in fractures, particularly among pensioners," said Virginia Asquith, departmental manager of orthopaedics at the town's general infirmary. "It was all a bit of mystery until we had discussions over coffee, listened to patients' chat and finally tracked down the culprit."

This proved to be the wheelie-bins. They were introduced to the tidy-minded residents of Pontefract exactly three months ago and almost immediately, pensioners began falling into the bins after leaning over the rims with mops, spraining ankles when they climbed on the rubbish to stamp it flat, and being blown away in windy weather as they wheeled bins out and refused to let go of the handles.

"I think the problem has come to light here because of the tradition of keeping bins clean, especially among older people who seem to be suffering most," said Ms Asquith.

The accidents add a new chapter to the lore and legend of wheelie-bins, which have been blamed for traffic accidents — when they break loose — and crime, with burglars using them to block householders' drives to gain time to escape if disturbed.

"It's funny in a way, but also a serious preventative health matter," said Ms Asquith, whose nurses have been commended for spotting the reason for the rise in breaks. "We are now running a drive for everyone to follow Wakefield council's wheelie-bin instructions to the letter — for instance, laying them on their sides if you have to clean them, and arranging for the binmen to wheel them out if the weather is gusty or you are frail."

Wakefield council last night set up a telephone wheelie-bin helpline to remind callers of its instructions for cleaning the containers, which were issued with the new bins in September.

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Sketch

Christmas fun for Major's puppies

Simon Hoggart

CHRISTMAS comes earlier every year, and it arrived in the Commons yesterday during Prime Minister's Question Time. John Major announced that he would not rule out Britain joining a single European currency in the lifetime of the next parliament.

I was reminded of the inspirational words in one of the best-loved Yuletide songs:

Later on, by the fire,
We will drink, and perspire,

(I am not quite sure about that line)

And face, unafraid,
The plans that we made,
Walking in a Winter Wonderland!

And face, unafraid, the plans that we made! It must certainly have taken courage in Mr Major's case. Here is one policy he isn't going to take back to the shop, just because it doesn't quite fit, or he doesn't like the colour.

If you gave the Prime Minister a pair of scratchy brown socks in a hideous plaid, and he said "Thank you very much, you could scarcely have made a more appropriate choice!", and you then inquired whether he really, truly liked them, he would reply, as he did yesterday: "Of course that is the position. I have made that clear on a number of occasions, and nothing has changed."

But a discussion of a single European currency was not all the festive merriment we enjoyed. Tony Banks (Lab, Newham NW) rose to ask the Prime Minister whether, "when he writes his customary letter to Santa, will he make it clear that he will not be asking for a puppy, because a puppy is for all year, not just as a present."

Mr Banks, who is the most articulate supporter of animal rights in the House, was perfectly serious.

Mr Major was perfectly serious in his reply, if a little long-winded. His version of the nine-word slogan "A dog is for life, not just for Christmas" was: "I hope that everyone bears in mind that it is a present for the long-term and not just the short-term, and I hope everyone will bear that in mind." (31 words)

But of course Mr Major already has lots of puppies of his own. They are called Tory backbenchers. They leap up to lick his face. They leave wet hairs all over his trousers. They pee on his shoes (well, probably not, but you get the general idea).

Take David Lidington (C, Aylesbury). He stood up, tongue hanging out, with glossy coat and wet nose, to ask: "Can he tell me which local education authority had the worst results, and what options he would recommend to parents who are in that local education authority?"

This "question" was, of course, aimed at Tony Blair, who lives in Islington but sends his eldest child to a grant maintained school elsewhere.

Unlike many Labour MPs, I think this is a reasonable field of attack; you cannot, as a parent, prescribe one system for the public and another for your own children.

But that isn't the point. Healthy, frisky pups like Mr Lidington are always looking for another backside to sniff. He had almost certainly been fed the question by the whips. It was full of meaty chunks of propaganda, and lots of nourishing marrowbone jelly, which is probably why he threw it up on the carpet.

But the best Christmas gift for the Government is the crisis in France.

Sir Peter Tapsell raised it yesterday, saying that it demonstrated the perils of a single currency, as advocated by Labour.

Every time you switch on the TV there's another pundit or minister telling us that the situation is very grave, that the implications for Britain are profound, and that it ill behoves us to take pleasure.

Really? After decades of being mocked and scorned by the French, can't we have just a little gloat? Just one tiny snicker? I'm sure John Major is, in private, hugging himself with glee, like a small boy with a new puppy.

A clockwork one, of course.

Campaigners outraged after Howard turns back evidence and says he is 'not minded' to back appeal

Blow to Bridgewater Four

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

THE Home Secretary last night delivered a blow to those who have campaigned for 16 years to free the men jailed for murdering newsboy Carl Bridgewater by announcing he was "not minded to refer the case" to the Court of Appeal.

But for the first time in a high profile case, Michael Howard, said he had not taken a final decision. Instead he sent 10 volumes of evidence to the lawyers acting for the Bridgewater Four and invited them to "respond to his provisional conclusions".

Michael Hickey, aged 33, Vincent Hickey, aged 41, and Jim Robinson, aged 61, have protested their innocence ever since they were convicted in February 1979 of murdering newspaper delivery boy Carl Bridgewater. A fourth defendant, Patrick Molloy, was convicted of manslaughter and died in prison in 1981. He always claimed that he had been forced into making his crucial confession

Carl, aged 13, was shot dead when he interrupted a burglary at Yew Tree Farm, near Stourbridge, West Midlands, in 1978.

Michael Hickey's mother Ann Whelan, aged 52, from Birmingham, had been confident that the Home Office would refer the case back. Last night she said: "It is absolutely disgusting. But it is a provisional conclusion and one they are leaving us to contest which we shall do. It is so dreadful for the men."

Jim Nichol, the solicitor for the Bridgewater Four, last night said he was "stunned" by the decision. Mr Howard had taken less than half an hour to examine 10 volumes of evidence and a 170-page summary before the announcement was released to the media last night.

Mr Nichol told the three men the news. Michael Hickey defiantly responded: "We're fighting on, Jim, we're fighting on" but Vincent Hickey and Robinson greeted the news with long silences.

"They were pretty down," said Mr Nichol. "This is a quite outrageous decision. Michael Howard is usurping the functions of the court, something he just shouldn't do. I will be writing to tell him he's wrong.

"I believe he is so hopelessly wrong not to refer the case back that I will take the matter to the Divisional Court, which has the power to send it back without further reference to him. I'm outraged."

Since the four men were convicted at Stafford crown court there have been two appeals; eight police inquiries into the case; two books written; four television documentaries and numerous newspaper articles. The Home Office staff involved in examining the convictions believed the prosecution was badly handled, and a leaked Home Office document referred to the possible perjury of one detective, now dead. The jury foreman at the original trial, Tim O'Malley has also expressed his belief in the men's innocence.

Last night Mr Howard published a five-page document detailing the "issues considered by the Home Secretary". It dismisses the idea that there was enough new evidence to justify a further referral the Court of Appeal and says: "The essential issues in relation to Mr Molloy are that he did not dispute that his confession statement was an accurate record of what he said, although he subsequently sought to resile from it. ESDA tests show that the document has not been interfered with.

"He continued to make admissions about his own presence at Yew Tree Farm, and about the parts played by his co-accused, up to and including the day of his death, 2½ years later."

The Home Office statement says the inquiries by the Merseyside police "have not revealed any evidence of oppression, or of systematic breaches of the Judges' Rules or Force Standing Orders."

The statement adds: "In relation to all four convicted men, allegations that responsibility for the murder lay elsewhere (and in particular with Hubert Spencer) appear to bear no weight."

It goes on to say that the Court of Appeal when it heard the case in 1989 had explicitly upheld the convictions against the other defendants without relying on Molloy's "confession".

Mr Howard also discloses that he has received "confidential information from two people" about the case on the basis that their anonymity was assured which might have implicated Hickey and Molloy in the offence. He adds that he has not relied on that evidence in deciding his "provisional view".

Next year the Home Secretary will lose the power to decide what happens to such cases when the Criminal Cases Review Authority is set up.

Three killed in 'gangland execution'

John Mullin

POLICE in Essex were last night hunting the killers of three local criminals found executed in an apparent gangland attack as they sat in their Range Rover in a remote country lane.

Detectives believe the men, still to be formally identified, may have been lured on to the farm lane at Rettendon, near Chelmsford, to discuss a drugs deal when they were ambushed early yesterday.

But they say the men, aged between 20 and 40, may instead have been forced to drive their car at gunpoint before they were each shot through the back of the head.

At least one firearm, a shotgun, was used but there were suggestions last night a revolver may also have been involved, indicating more than one killer.

Detective Superintendent Ivan Dibley, leading the investigation, said: "It looks like they may have been enticed down there or an arrangement made for them to be there.

"There is no real sign in the vehicle of a struggle or an attempt by any one of the men to get out. That tends to suggest they were either surprised or whoever committed the crime was in the vehicle with them."

The victims, all from the south Essex area, had convictions for serious offences. The owner of the F-registered metallic blue Range Rover is understood to be among the dead.

No weapon had been recovered, although several shotgun cartridges were found at the scene.

Forensic examination was continuing last night with the bodies still in the vehicle, 250 yards from the A130 Chelmsford to Southend road.

Paula Lamas, a home office pathologist, checked the victims at the scene, and will carry out full post mortem examinations today.

The dead-end lane, part of Whitehouse Farm, is used by courting couples and fishermen going to a nearby carp pond. It is known to the criminal fraternity — a delivery driver was abandoned there after a gang hijacked his lorry load of cigarettes six years ago, an empty stolen safe was once dumped there, and several burned out cars have been left in the lane.

Peter Theobald, aged 42, owner of the farm, discovered the bodies with his friend, Ken Jiggins, aged 47, a bricklayer, of nearby South Woodham Ferrers. They were driving to feed their pheasants, kept for shooting parties, when they came across the Range Rover parked in front of a locked gate.

Mr Jiggins went to ask the driver to move to let them pass. He said later: "It looked like they were asleep and it was only when we looked more closely we realised they had been shot in the head.

"I went back to call the police on my mobile phone.

"Peter walked up to the vehicle and looked in the back and said: 'There's one in the back as well.' "

Mr Theobald said: "It was a real shock, and nothing like that has ever happened around here."

There were no footprints or tyre tracks in the snow and there was no frost on the vehicle, probably indicating that it had not been there long — Mr Theobald had de-iced his Landrover before setting out to feed the pheasants.

The dead driver's head was to one side, the front passenger lolled forward, and the man in the back was lying flat on the seat.

Police last night appealed for anyone with any information to contact them on a special hotline: 01245-320333.

Peter Theobald (left) and Ken Jiggins, who found the bodies on a lane at Whitehouse Farm PHOTOGRAPHS: BARRY BLAND

First night

Sharp exterior with soft centre

Robin Thornber

Gulliver's Travels
Mold Theatr Clwyd

YOU DRIVE through seasonal snow flurries to Mold's Theatr Clwyd with great expectations. Although north Wales's culture complex is currently a headless horse, lacking an artistic director and full of arts consultants trying to find a future for it, the administration has put together what promises to be a cracking show for Christmas.

Humphrey Carpenter, he of the Mr Majeika children's books and BBC Radio 3's Night Waves (and biographer of Dennis Potter), has adapted Jonathan Swift's satire, Gulliver's Travels, for the stage. Lilliput and Yahoos should make a change from Grimm and Dickens and thigh-slapping principal boys.

Not only that but they've got political cartoonist Ralph Steadman, one of Swift's spiritual heirs in the satirical tradition, to design the sets and costumes. There's an exhibition of Steadman's vitriol-etched, anger-blotted drawings in the gallery before you go in to the show and that sets the high-pitched tone.

He did a series of etchings on this theme in 1964, reflecting his fellow-feeling for Swift (they're hung here), and returns to it to bring the ideas to life on stage. Steadman is as cold-eyed as Swift in his embittered perceptions of those who set themselves up as our rulers and betters.

There is both a sixties feel and a timeless quality to his drawings — a sense of mischief and deeply-felt anger. He uses the human ribcage and pelvis as a recurring theme, reducing characters to their common components and showing us their frailty as a sort of translucence — he sees through everything.

These two-dimensional drawings are demanding as working sketches for a theatre's production staff — wild, witty, imaginative grotesques. Theatr Clwyd's backstage team rises to the challenge, realising his vision in fabric and latex.

But it's only Steadman who really matches Swift's satirical edge. Carpenter updates the text astutely, giving us a Gulliver who is a pressured fund-holding GP, lured through his computer terminal into surfing cyberspace worlds of Lilliputians, giants and laptop zombies in Laputa.

In each of his nightmare experiences there's an echo of his daughter, tugging for attention, making the genial and congenial humanist point that people are what matters. But it's hardly hard-nosed satire.

The toying with scale allows for some splendid, spectacular effects — Gulliver's foot fills the proscenium arch in Lilliput — and Roger Redfarn's production, with music from Barrington Pheloung, is technically polished. But it's tricksy stuff that does the imagining for you and blocks off any participation by the kids in the audience.

Jack Klaff plays Gulliver as everyone's slightly ineffectual dad, but on the first night his playing was lack-lustre. The rest of company enter energetically into the cartoon-style roles, but, in spite of the sharp-edged design, the show is ultimately soft-centred.

In Outlook tomorrow

- Malcolm Bradbury on what comes after post-modernism
- Megan Tresidder interviews Anne Marie West
- Geoff Mulgan: Why Labour shouldn't bash poor teachers

Plus The joys of bad sex

Surgeon quits over demand to falsely create waiting list

continued from page 1

sions, nurses and doctors. However, between 1992 and 1995 the budget had been increased by £1 million to pay for extra facilities and staff.

He was trying to increase the prices charged to purchasing authorities for the coming year's contracts, but the authorities were looking for economies and were unwilling to accept the argument that the hospital prices were too low.

He said that staff in the unit were under "constant and unremitting pressures from increasing demand and expectation on the one hand, and the purchasers looking for price reductions and cost-efficiencies on the other. All the time we are expected to do more for less."

Mr Adams's article says that his department had become a victim of NHS rules which demand that prices charged to purchasers must be based on costs. Because the unit had low costs it could only charge low prices, even though it was offering high quality services with no waiting list.

"The department is the cheapest neurosurgical department in England, with an average cost of £1,994, compared with the average of £3,124.

"If the cost per case were increased by 50 per cent, the department would still cost less less than the average neurosurgical unit."

The British Medical Association said yesterday that the case was symptomatic of what is happening in the NHS, with money failing to follow patients and efficient units being penalised.

Mawhinney gaffe puts warning to judges in Mackay's mouth

Clare Dyer
Legal Correspondent

THE Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay, yesterday fired off an angry letter to the Daily Telegraph protesting at the paper's "erroneous" account of a speech which he did not make. The report had claimed he was warning judges that they were not superior to Parliament.

Last night the error was understood to have originated with the Tory party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, who apparently confused a Mackay speaking engagement at Guildhall, in the City of London, with a cabinet document briefing ministers on Lord Mackay's views.

Lord Mackay denied all knowledge of a speech, previewed in a front page lead story by the paper's political editor, allegedly due to be given at Guildhall last night, warning judges not to overstep the mark in quashing ministers' decisions.

The débâcle is the third time the gaffe-prone Mr Mawhinney has put his foot in his mouth. He angered the judges by urging people who feel a sentence is too lenient to write to the judge and protest. His comments at the Tory party conference ridiculing Camden council for funding the Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre caused embarrassment when it emerged that it was funded by the Home Office and Save the Children Fund to teach childcare and basic literacy skills to Bangladeshi women.

Lord Mackay acknowledges in his letter that he holds some of the views attributed to him in the article. But he states: "I would never warn the judiciary not to overstep their powers by using judicial review to challenge ministerial decisions."

He adds that judges' independence "is something in which I believe absolutely and which neither the Lord Chancellor nor any other member of the Government would ever seek to challenge".

The latest tension has developed over the judges' opposition to plans by the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, for minimum sentences for persistent burglars and drug dealers, and automatic life sentences for repeat rapists.

We thought about calling it E.T.'s Finger, but it isn't long and knobbly with a glowing light at the end.

THE SERIOUS BEER WITH THE SILLY NAME.

هكذا من الاصل

هكذا من الاصل

What's in it?

Basic legal compositional requirements of the food we eat:

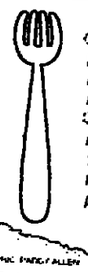
Burger
Must contain 80% meat of which 65% must be lean. The remaining 15% can include fat, skin, gristle and sinew. An economy burger must contain 80% meat of which 65% must be lean.

Sausage
Must contain 50% meat of which, if it is advertised only as a pork sausage, must not be less than 65% lean. The remaing meat can comprise diaphragm, ears, eyeballs, heart, kidney, liver, pancreas, tail, thymus and tongue.

Pies
If sold as cooked pies, must have meat content of not less than 25%. If uncooked, 21%.

Chicken nuggets
Any bird carcass products including gizzard, heart, liver and neck.

Fish fingers
No compositional requirements. Commonly include fish tails, offcuts and water.



Nutritionists stress that danger lies in the meat content not the other requirements which are usually made up of cereal, starch, water, etc.
The government deregulated and relaxed compositional standards in 1984 giving manufacturers greater freedom in the production of food products.

GRAPHIC: ANDY ALLEN

Smithfield market's workers and customers say beef is safe and the Government should do more to reassure consumers PHOTOGRAPH: TOM JENKINS

'There is currently no evidence that BSE can be transmitted to humans'

Major stops short of endorsing 'safe' beef

Vivek Chaudhary

JOHN Major moved yesterday to contain escalating public fears about mad cow disease as the Government resisted pressure for an independent inquiry into the possible dangers of eating beef.

He stopped short of saying, during Commons questions, that he thought beef was safe to eat and stressedinstead the views of experts.

"There is currently no scientific evidence that BSE [bovine spongiform encephalopathy] can be transmitted to humans or that eating beef causes CJD [Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease] in humans," he said. "That issue is not in question. I am also advised that beef is a safe and wholesome product."

Ann Taylor, shadow leader of the house, called for an urgent Commons debate on the subject in view of the "widely conflicting expert opinion".

She added: "This is of great concern to many people throughout the country. It is not as simple as the Prime Minister has said."

The comments in the Commons came as more schools banned beef and caterers called on the Government to provide clear guidelines on which beef dishes should be served, particularly to children.

Kent county council announced yesterday that it would take beef off its schools menu. Six schools in Devon also said they would stop serving beef. They join more than 600 schools in London, West Glamorgan, Staffordshire, Humberside and Oldham, who have already banned beef.

Consumer groups urged the Government to launch an independent inquiry.

Sue Dibb, co-director of the Food Commission, said: "I think nobody is trusting what is coming out of government any more. The Government seems more interested in propping up the beef industry rather than admitting that there may be a risk, however small it may be.

"I think what is happening is that every time a minister gets up and says beef is safe ... a whole lot more people stop buying beef because they don't trust the Government."

That, she added, could be worse for the beef industry than an independent inquiry, which might decide that only a very small number of products are risky.

The Consumers' Association said a public inquiry could help give the public the information they needed.

But a Ministry of Agriculture spokesman said an inquiry would serve no purpose. "We are being advised by the most eminent scientific advisers and we don't feel the need for an independent inquiry. We are satisfied that British beef is safe to eat."

Nigel Griffiths, Labour's consumer affairs spokesman, called on ministers to meet scientists who fear that beef could be dangerous.

Leader comment and Letters, page 8

'We eat it every day and we haven't turned into nutters.' **Vivek Chaudhary** on market views

"BRITISH Beef. What's it got? It's got the lot" was one of the meat industry's slogans during an advertising campaign to boost sales.

Early yesterday morning at Smithfield meat market in the City of London, workers were keen to point out what they say British beef hasn't got.

"It hasn't got mad cow disease," said salesman John Buckley as he loaded boxes of boneless beef into a van for delivery to butchers in east London.

"Sales are very poor at the moment and the industry should be stressing the good points of beef. British housewives have been buying beef for years. I've met some mad women in my time but I don't think that's down to mad cow disease."

As a chilly wind blew across the 800-year-old market, porters known as bummarees hollered "mind your backs" as they weaved their way through customers buying enormous slabs of meat, much of it beef.

The clatter of cleavers crashing on to chopping boards echoed in the background as meat cutters, their white overalls drenched in blood, removed joints of beef, some of them weighing 200lbs, from hooks along the market's passageways.

Despite the hectic activity in what could easily be described as a vegetarian's hell, most were quick to point out that business was at an all time low following the recent publicity over mad cow disease.

"The industry should be booming but things are very bad," said Ron Iddiols, a salesman with Absalom and Tribe Ltd. "Our sales are down by a third. Retailers just don't want to buy too much beef because the customers aren't buying it. I have got loads of stewing beef which I just can't sell."

Harry, a bummaree at Smithfield for the past 41 years, sipped a cup of tea as he shivered in the cold after loading a consignment of beef on to a van.

"There's nothing wrong with British beef," he said. "It's the best in the world and I can't see what people are scared about. Most of us eat beef every day and it's not done us any harm. None of us have turned into nutters."

Retailers buying meat at Smithfield also complained about the lack of interest in beef by customers. Shahid Hussain, who runs a butcher's shop in west London, had just purchased £1,000 worth of lamb and £700 worth of chicken. Normally he spends £1,000 a week on beef but yesterday he bought just £200 worth.

"The customers just don't want to buy it and the stories over mad cow disease have affected my business quite badly," he said. "The Government should inform people that there's nothing to worry about otherwise a lot of people are going to be out of work."

Peter Murphy had just opened for the day's trade at his butcher's shop in north London when his weekly delivery from Smithfield arrived.

He admits that sales of beef are slightly down and that many customers have told him that they are concerned about mad cow disease.

"Most of my beef is free range so I have not been that badly affected. The existence of mad cow disease in beef has never been proved. I have been eating beef for 30 years and I plan to eat it for the next 30 years, if I live that long, that is."

Inquiry into police 'leaks'

Owen Bowcott

ONE of Britain's most senior police investigators has been called in to examine allegations that information has been leaked from the National Criminal Intelligence Service to underworld figures.

The inquiry is being headed by the Chief Constable of Northumbria, John Stevens, who conducted two investigations into claims that members of the Northern Ireland security forces provided loyalist paramilitaries with intelligence files.

Eight detectives, among the most experienced in the Northumbria force, have been gathered in the last two weeks to collect evidence.

The inquiry is a severe blow to the prestige of NCIS which was established in 1992 to coordinate big investigations between forces. It comes at a time when the police and MI5 have been battling behind the scenes for resources and competing for primacy on security issues.

The 500 staff at NCIS, whose annual budget is £25 million, gather information on the activities of professional criminals. Officers do not make arrests but accumulate, analyse and process intelligence for other forces to investigate.

Their principal targets have been big drug dealers, organised crime, counterfeiting and money-laundering, high-profile football hooligans and paedophiles. The UK bureau of Interpol is based at NCIS's headquarters in Vauxhall, south London.

The inquiry will concentrate on whether security has been compromised at NCIS, and will draft recommendations to ensure that the circulation of sensitive intelligence files is restricted.

Northumbria Police said yesterday: "Mr Stevens has been asked to inquire into matters concerning the National Criminal Intelligence Service by the service's director general, Albert Pacey. It is not known how long the inquiry will take or where in the country the investigation might lead." An NCIS spokeswoman said the inquiry was into a "confidential matter".

Mr Stevens's investigation follows a lengthy internal inquiry by another force and the discovery of fresh information, including claims that intelligence has been passed to criminals.

Microsoft teams up with rival to join Internet 'gold rush'

Mark Tran in New York

THE Microsoft chairman, Bill Gates, yesterday acknowledged a rare defeat by signing a deal with a rival company to get his computer software giant into the Internet "gold rush".

While Microsoft has established a stranglehold on the personal computer software market, it has been slow to realise the potential of the Internet.

Yesterday, Mr Gates unveiled Microsoft's Internet strategy with the most notable element being its decision to license Java programming language for Internet access, developed by Sun Microsystems. Microsoft normally only uses products it has developed or bought itself.

The initiative announced by Mr Gates at Microsoft's headquarters in Edmond, Washington, comes at a time when other new companies are moving quickly to position themselves for what Mr Gates has called the Internet gold rush. Analysts say Internet-related revenues could reach $10-20 billion (£6.5-13 billion) by the year 2000.

Besides the ground-breaking licensing arrangement with Sun, Microsoft also introduced Gibraltar, a program that allows online merchants to set up shop on the World Wide Web, the graphic portion of the Internet. Blackbird, another new program, will create screens and menus on the World Wide Web to serve as catalogues, reference books and storefronts.

Microsoft's moves represent a belated attempt to regain the initiative after seeing new companies like Netscape and Spyglass flourish. Microsoft only began concentrating on the Internet earlier this year. Now Mr Gates has made the Internet Microsoft's top priority, authorising it to spend $1 billion (£650 million) to overtake its rivals.

"It takes even more guts to bet on 'the sea change' when you are a market leader, but it is the only way to position yourself," Mr Gates recently told Microsoft executives.

Microsoft's tardy discovery of the Internet has led some analysts to think that the era of its dominance is over and that the future belongs to the Netscapes of this world. These companies produce the software — browsers — for users to find their way around the Internet.

Netscape, which holds 75 per cent of the Internet browser market, made its debut a few months ago, yet its market value has reached $6.5 billion (£4.2 billion).

But one analyst warned: "Gates can drive some of these people out of the market."

When Sinatra was born, the first shoots of the century's popular music were starting to emerge from the alluvial matter of musical theatre, marching bands, vaudeville, travelling minstrel shows and roadside juke joints. The strains of vernacular music were beginning a process of cross-fertilisation that continues as Sinatra enters his ninth decade.

Review cover story

Monday-Thursday 8am - 8pm · Friday 8am - 9pm† · Saturday 8am - 8pm‡ · Sunday 10am - 4pm††

All sizes are approximate and not to scale. Merchandise subject to availability. Offer applies to all toolboxes and selected Bosch power tools. Available from Homebase stores until 27th December 1995. Purchases must be paid for in full and in person at the store between 2nd December 1995 and 27th December 1995. The 20% offer on toolboxes applies to all marked prices.
†Except Walton-on-Thames which closes 6pm Friday and 6pm Saturday. ‡Except Croydon, Kensington, Camberley, High Wycombe, Northampton, Leeds, Nottingham, Mill Hill and Solihull which open 11am - 5pm and Hemmington Colt and Falkirk which open 9am - 6pm

Reprieve for second Nigerian

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

A SECOND Nigerian asylum-seeker facing deportation was given a last-minute extension yesterday by the Home Office to allow a legal challenge.

But the two cases which have been postponed follow the removal of 229 other Nigerians to Lagos after claiming asylum in Britain so far this year. On Wednesday the Home Office postponed the deportation of Abiodun Igbindu, aged 25, a pro-democracy activist, for 14 days while further representations were made on his behalf.

A total of 2,029 asylum-seekers from around the world were deported from Britain in the first 10 months of 1995.

Lawyers for Ade Onibiyo, aged 19, were given five working days yesterday to prepare an application for a judicial review of the decision to deport him.

The announcement was made just half an hour before he was due to be put on a plane to Lagos.

Mr Onibiyo's father, Abdul, was sent back six weeks ago after his attempt to remain in Britain failed despite the backing of a large campaign, including MPs and his union, Unison. He has not been in contact with his wife or five children in Britain since.

The Home Office minister Ann Widdicombe said yesterday that Ade Onibiyo's removal date had been postponed until December 14 *pending the legal action. He* had not been able to prove he "would be in individual danger" if he returned to Nigeria. There was no evidence that his father had "come to grief" since being sent back.

But the Labour foreign affairs spokesman, Tony Lloyd, said it was "absolutely staggering that a Home Office minister can say without any sense of feeling that there is no evidence that his father has come to grief when they don't have a clue what has happened to him".

The Home Office decision was bizarre given the widespread human rights abuses in Nigeria under General Abacha's military regime.

The Onibiyo family case is only the tip of the iceberg. Home Office figures show that in 1994 there were 2,108 "removals and voluntary departures" including 192 to Nigeria. The number of illegal entrants who were deported was more than 5,000.

Among other Nigerians facing deportation is Sutana Adesulure, aged 38, a lawyer and political activist, who claimed political asylum in Britain in January after arriving, via Hong Kong, on his brother's passport.

As the secretary of a militant youth organisation, he fled the country *fearing* arrest. The police had confiscated his own passport.

His application was refused and he lost an appeal. Mr Adesulure was due to be deported two weeks ago but it was postponed at the last minute after an intervention by John Patten, the former Home Office minister.

Mr Adesulure told the Guardian from his detention centre in Oxfordshire: "I fear I might be killed. The man [General Abacha] has already demonstrated his harshness."

● *David Pallister adds:* A future Labour government would impose a progressive oil embargo against Nigeria if there was no change in the military regime, Mr Lloyd said yesterday.

At a press conference in the House of Commons with representatives of Nigerian pro-democracy groups, Mr Lloyd endorsed a report which argued that sanctions should be imposed by the United *Nations Security Council* because the regime presented a threat to peace and international security.

This was the determination which allowed UN intervention in Rwanda and Somalia.

Mr Lloyd said: "The Nigerian regime has to be given a clear signal that it must honour the democratic mandate of the people which was annulled in June 1993."

The report, written by Dr Kayode Fayemi, says that an oil embargo would not cause any more pain to ordinary Nigerians than the economic afflictions they have suffered under successive military regimes.

No refunds for rail passengers ● Forecasters say freeze will last over the weekend

Beach game . . . A snowball fight at Brighton yesterday, when the South took the brunt of the bad weather PHOTOGRAPH: E. HAMILTON WEST

On track for cold comfort

Rebecca Smithers
Political Correspondent

RAIL passengers will not be entitled to compensation under the Passenger's Charter unless the freezing weather halts virtually all forms of transport.

The 25 train operating companies have to pay refunds in "normal bad weather conditions," but not if emergency timetables are introduced.

However, a spokesman for South-Eastern Trains, which runs services from London to Kent and East Sussex down to Hastings, said the weather would have to get a lot worse before the introduction of an emergency timetable with a skeleton service.

And a British Rail spokesman said that such emergency timetables had only ever applied in Scotland.

But Labour's transport spokeswoman Glenda Jackson said: "This proves the Citizen's Charter is nothing more than a Citizen's Cheater. The transport system has been in chaos yet thousands of commuters may not receive a single penny in compensation.

"John Major's favourite policy initiative is being undermined by the wrong kind of snow."

Freezing conditions delayed trains in the South-east and left hundreds of motorists stranded for up to 10 hours on the M25 on Tuesday night and some Heathrow flights to Europe were cancelled. Yesterday, serious disruption to commuter rail services to and from London continued, with some trains delayed by more than an hour. Last night the bad weather affected East Sussex, Essex and Suffolk.

Forecasters said the snow would stop, but the cold weather would last over the weekend.

"The next problem will be freezing fog, especially on Saturday," said a spokesman for the London Weather Centre.

The south of England took the brunt of the bad weather yesterday with parts of the coastal region being turned into a "skating rink", according to the AA, which with the RAC rescued tens of thousands of stranded motorists.

'Encouraging' new meningitis vaccine

Tom Sharratt
and Chris Mihill

AN improved vaccine against one of the strains of meningococcal meningitis seen in this country could be ready in 12 months, a conference on immunisation heard yesterday.

Dennis Jones, former director of the Public Health Laboratory Service in Manchester, said tests on the new vaccine — described as a Group C conjugate — were "very encouraging".

He was speaking to doctors, nurses and health visitors at the conference in Stockport organised by Manchester university medical school's department of epidemiology and health sciences.

Three similar so-called Group C vaccines are currently available, but the new one would be an improvement, he said.

A different type of vaccine for Group B, the most common and dangerous strain, is also being tested but has not yet come to clinical trial. The results of the Group C trials are expected in 1996, he said. Group B results may not be available for five years.

New guidelines on the treatment of meningitis will be announced today in a Communicable Diseases report from the PHLS headquarters at Colindale, north London.

Early diagnosis and treatment with antibiotics were essential, said Dr Jones. "They are the keynote. If you do that it will prevent disease and possibly save some lives."

Meningitis has claimed eight lives in recent weeks. According to the PHLS, there were 105 cases in October, compared with 78 in the same month last year. Confirmed cases total 1,005 so far this year, against 936 last year.

Meanwhile, another school was closed yesterday after a boy of four, who has not been named, died of meningitis. The boy died from suspected meningococcal septicaemia on Wednesday after being taken to Walsgrave hospital in Coventry.

His family have been immunised and more than 40 children at his school in the city, Eburne primary, have been given antibiotics in an attempt to ward off the disease. The nursery section of the school was closed yesterday as a precaution.

● Influenza cases have continued to increase over the past week, and are higher than a normal winter but still below levels seen two years ago, according to figures published yesterday.

The latest statistics from the Birmingham research unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners, which has 93 family doctor practices monitoring cases, show flu levels running at 178 cases per 100,000 of the population.

The figures, collected until December 3, show a rise of 50 cases per 100,000 compared to the previous week's figure.

A spokesman for the unit, who said the increase was occurring across all regions and all age groups, added: "A rate of 178 is higher than seen in a normal winter, although it is less than the peak rate in 1993, which was 235."

Trivial Pursuit

it takes all sorts

Trivial Pursuit is a registered trademark of Horn Abbot International LTD

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MP 'told wife to forget him'

Sally Weale

AS A newly-elected Tory MP, David Ashby took his Italian wife to tea at the House of Commons then told her to forget him as now he could have "whoever he wanted," the High Court heard yesterday.

"I found that very strange," Silvana Ashby told the court on the 12th day of her husband's libel action against the Sunday Times over allegations that he was gay.

She also alleged that her husband didn't like sex and embarrassed her by sending her to the butcher to pick up his favourite dish of "pig's arse in cabbage".

When they met on the ski slopes in February 1964, she told the court, it was love at first sight. A year later they were married, and three years after that had a daughter. He became MP for North-west Leicestershire in 1983.

"He showed me around the House of Commons and we had tea. Then coming back down the Embankment, he said, 'Remember Silvana, from now on for you I am dead. I don't exist for you any more. I will dedicate myself to my work. Don't count on me. I can have whoever I want now'."

Mrs Ashby, 52, of Putney, south-west London, described his increasing indifference towards her.

Later there was verbal aggression and physical fights. On one occasion, he held a pillow over her face.

"He tried to avoid me most of the time.

"Very often, I would say, 'Please David, sit down and talk to me'.

"He would say, 'I have no time'. He would leave the house and slam the door.

"Occasionally, he would say to me 'Make an appointment if you want to talk to me. Come and see me in my office'. I don't know if it was a joke."

Mrs Ashby's suspicions were aroused when her husband kept a university student called Tim as his parliamentary research assistant. She denied she was a jealous, suspicious woman.

"I trusted him. If you love someone, you trust them. I love David more than my life. I sincerely do." Mr Ashby, 55, who had been listening impassively in court, then walked out.

In October 1993, Mr Ashby told her he was leaving. "I insisted he should give a good reason for going. He said 'I have got to tell you something. I have changed.' He started to cry."

When she asked him what he meant, he said: "I had an encounter many years ago. Then I put it out of my mind and now I can't."

She started crying and put her arms round him, asking him what she could do.

"I said, 'If you have changed once, you can change again'. He said 'it is not as easy as that'." Mrs Ashby went on: "I was in no doubt that he was telling me he was homosexual."

Mr Ashby is claiming damages over allegations that he shared a double bed with a man friend during a holiday in Goa at the end of 1993. Times Newspapers Ltd and former Sunday Times editor Andrew Neil deny libel. They accept that Mr Ashby did not holiday with a man in Goa, but assert that he is homosexual.

Mrs Ashby admitted leaving rude messages on the answering machine of Ciaran Kilduff. Mr Ashby's friend with whom she has alleged he had a homosexual relationship.

The case continues.

Silvana Ashby yesterday: 'I love David more than my life'

Toddler's fertility operation

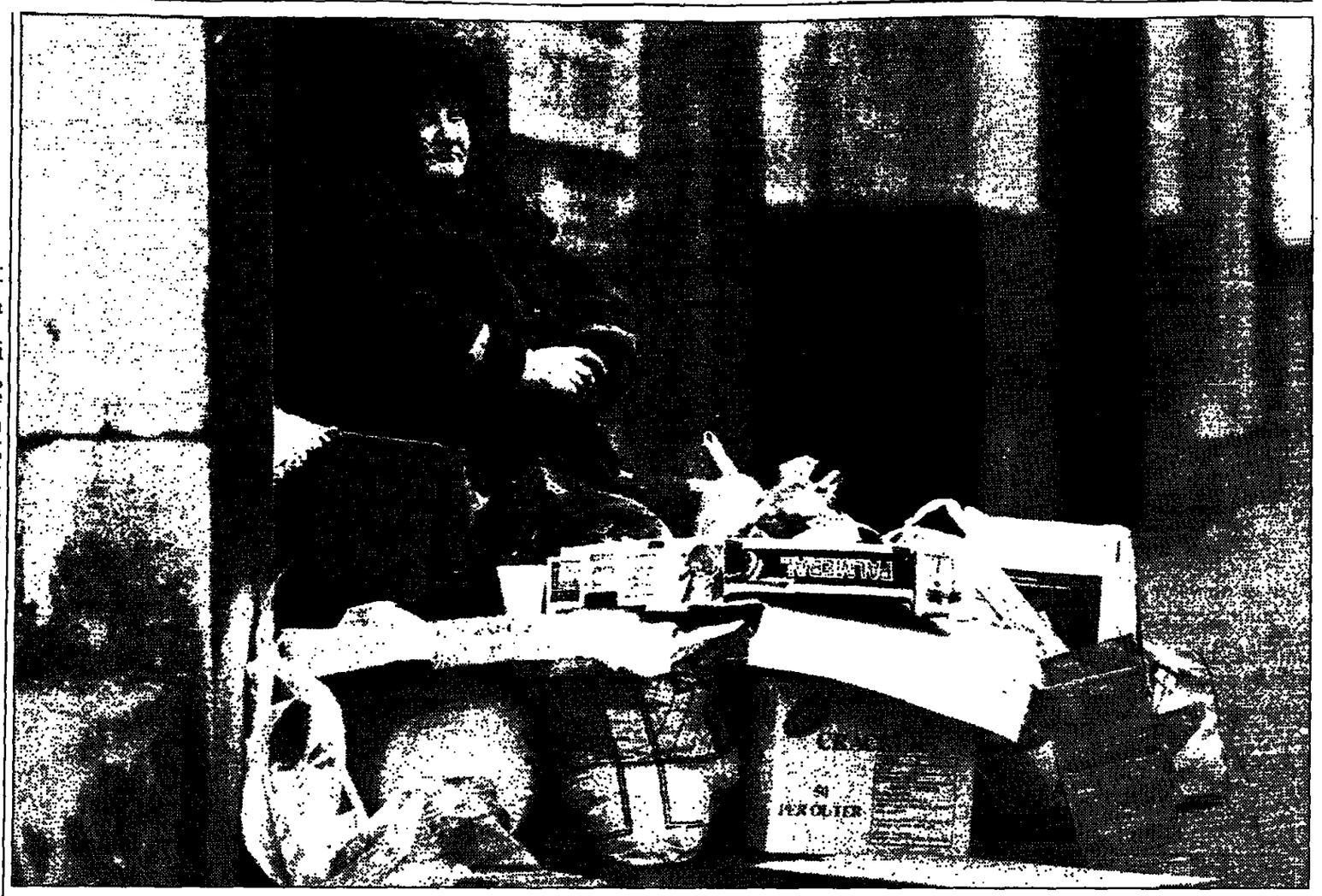
A THREE-year-old girl has made medical history as the youngest person to undergo pioneering surgery to stop cancer treatment making her infertile.

Harriet Selka, who suffers from a rare kidney cancer, had part of her ovary removed in a 90-minute operation so that it will not be damaged by radiotherapy.

The tiny section of tissue has been deep frozen in liquid nitrogen and will be replaced after the treatment is finished, possibly in 20 years.

Harriet, of Thurstonland, Huddersfield, is the youngest of a handful of people to undergo the experimental procedure, which was devised by Roger Gosden, professor of reproductive biology at Leeds general infirmary, and his team.

Professor Gosden said: "Sometimes people say that reproductive technology is going too far. I believe that what we're doing will be socially acceptable because we're trying to restore a natural state."



Doorway shelter . . . Anne, aged 46, agrees with the princess that the young are forced into begging: 'If you don't have an address, it's impossible to find your feet' PHOTOGRAPH TOM JENKINS

Street life divided for and against princess

Homeless mirror rest of nation in their response to speech from Diana, writes Edward Pilkington

MARK must be the only person in Britain who not only missed Princess Diana on Panorama last month, but had not even heard of the programme before it was pointed out to him yesterday.

Homeless for the past three years, Mark, aged 25, spends most of his time on his own — well out of earshot of pub gossip, let alone a television. He sleeps in a park in south London, but passes the days along the Strand in central London, a common hangout for young homeless people.

Panorama notwithstanding, he has firm views about the Prince and Princess of Wales. "Di would make a great queen. She's got the common touch — she can talk to people."

Charles fares less well. "He'd be a rubbish king. He's too upper class. Look at the way he treated his wife — made her call him 'sir', that's what they say."

Mark became homeless as a result of one of the pitfalls highlighted by the princess in her Centrepoint speech — he ran away from home after a row with his parents, who accused him of having stolen a video from an uncle. For the first year he lived by begging, which he said was essential for survival.

Anne, aged 46, who spends her days wrapped in a thick coat and surrounded by cardboard boxes and plastic bags, said the collapse of the Wales's marriage was "very sad. Nothing seems to last these days." It was the death of her husband eight years ago that propelled her on to the streets, where she has lived ever since.

She agreed with Princess Diana that young people are forced into begging. "If you're young and don't have an address, it's impossible to find your feet."

Robbie, aged 34, a homeless Glaswegian who sells the Big Issue magazine by Embankment tube station in central London, was scathing about the speech. "It's a load of bollocks. Most people who are begging are doing so because they want to."

He said he felt the princess's intervention had helped to raise homelessness in the public mind, but criticised her for being naive. "She doesn't understand what life's really like on the streets, and she shouldn't pretend she does. She's just playing for the sympathy vote."

The princess had a fan in Tommy van Bogaert, aged 18, from Belgium, who ran away from home in 1993 and now lives in a Centrepoint project. When he was introduced to Princess Diana at the Savoy theatre yesterday she recalled his Christian name, having met him at a similar function a year ago. "I was dead impressed by that. I met Charles in Sussex last year and I bet he wouldn't remember my name."

Queen of Hearts set to step up caring rhetoric

AS the Princess of Wales settles into her role of "Queen of Hearts" she can be expected to deliver further campaigning speeches, *writes Edward Pilkington.*

Ministers covering a wide field of concerns should brace themselves for blasts of her rhetoric as she seeks to add gravitas to her self-proclaimed role as emotional ambassador.

As patron or president of 68 charities, the endless round of their AGMs and fund-raising galas gives her perfect platforms to air views on her interests, which fall broadly into five categories: arts, children, health, disabilities and poverty.

Athough these interests account for many of the 68 charities, as well as absorbing her time as a "carer" — witness her claim this week to make late night visits to dying hospital patients — they have not prompted impassioned speeches like yesterday's on homelessness.

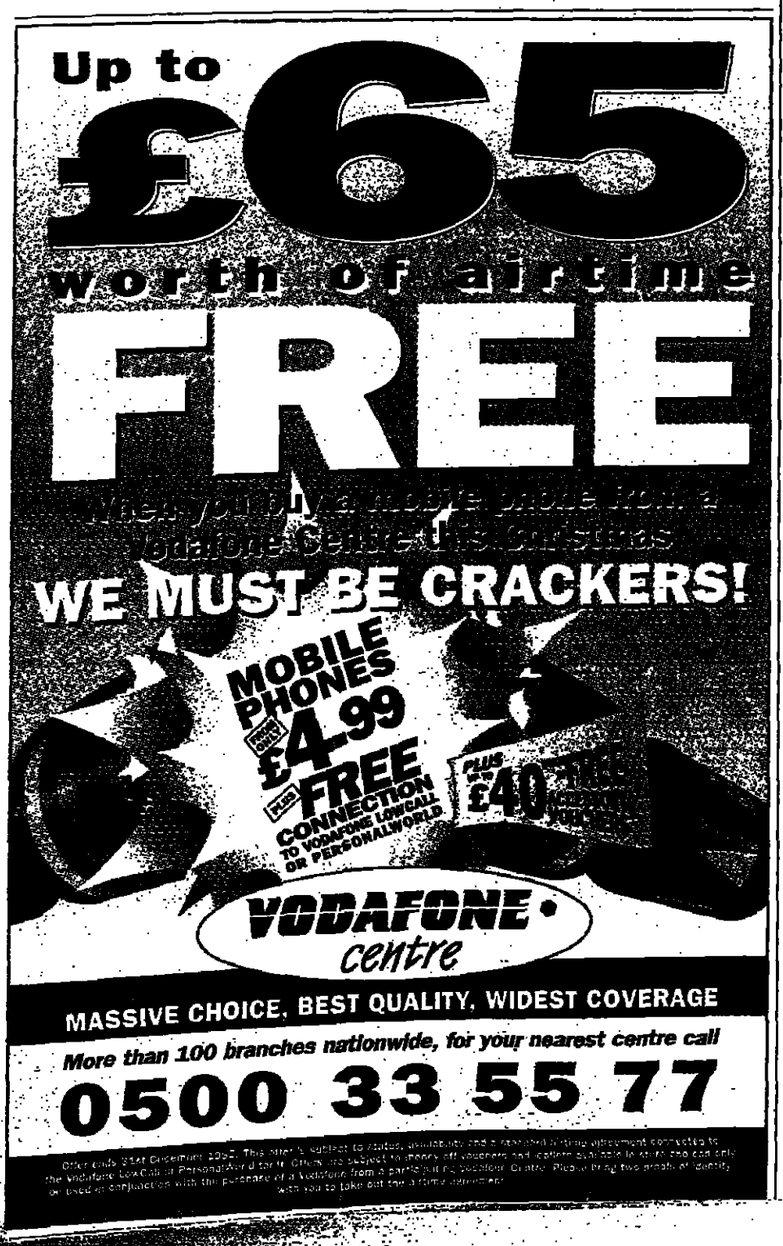
It is in the areas of disabilities and poverty that we can expect to hear her at her most outspoken.

She wishes to be seen as champion of those marginalised or ostracised in society — a class in which she might place herself in the light of her experiences within the palace.

Typical is her work with Aids victims, both privately and through the National Aids Trust.

Derek Bodell, the trust's director, recalls how in 1987 she generated a rash of publicity about the disease in America when she was pictured holding the hand of a child with HIV. "It's vogue to be cynical about her charitable work, but that really made a difference," he said.

Her name can earn charities thousands of pounds in sponsorship. Turning Point, which works with those with drugs and alcohol problems, raised £60,000 from a recent film screening largely due to its patron. Indeed, it was at a Turning Point function in June 1993 that the princess made one her first outspoken speeches, about women being forced into mental illness by the pressures of family duties — a theme that also sounds eerily familiar in view of recent events.



The last few months have been a sore, sore time for women the world over, if the experience of editors of glossy women's magazines is anything to go by. "Shall I visit them?" suggested the Princess. "I just want them to know that there's someone who can share in their inner loneliness."

Bel Littlejohn

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Snipers fly the nests of death

Grbavica, the defiant Serb-held district of Sarajevo, is giving up its menacing and bloody secret, reports **Julian Borger**

THE door to the eleventh-floor flat looks like every other impersonal entrance in the block. According to the painted inscription, it belongs to Vladimir Cosic of the "Serb Army". It is held shut by a piece of string and a peg.

Inside, the apartment is lifeless and bare. On the floor there are a few old clothes, dog ends, some grainy photographs of laughing people a long time ago — and about 20 large, spent bullet cartridges.

"Sniper's nest" seems too cosy a phrase with which to describe it. It is as chilling and desolate as the grave.

A fist-size hole has been punched in the wall and then all but closed again with two metal sheets, leaving an inch-wide slit.

Closing one eye, one can see beyond the concrete banks of Sarajevo's Miljacka River — which forms the front line in this part of town — to a 30-yard stretch of the city's main thoroughfare, known since April 1992 as Sniper Alley.

Near the hole, a series of notches has been scored into the plaster. There are similar marks in other apartments, with equally good views of the boulevard. In one flat, a photographer found what appeared to be a scoreboard, with notches alongside a list of names.

For Sarajevans, this apartment block and others in the Serb-held district of Grbavica have assumed a menace far beyond their grim architecture. Not long ago, if you were in the centre of town and you could see any part of them, you were in mortal danger.

That was before the present ceasefire. After three months of peace in Sarajevo, Vladimir Cosic's room is abandoned, and the muffled sounds filtering through the hole in the wall yesterday were the angry slogans and defiant songs of Grbavica's Serb population.

Grbavica, like all the Serb suburbs around Sarajevo, has been handed to the Bosnian government by the Dayton peace agreement brokered by the United States. The Bosnian police are due to take over its streets in little more than three months time.

Grbavica's residents have more reason than any of the city's Serbs to fear reprisals. Theirs is a rebel-held salient in the heart of the capital. Mortars and artillery shells can be deadly, but sniping is personal. The killer chooses his victim. In Sarajevo, he may even know his victim. At the very least, he knows if the target is a civilian.

Snipers fought on both sides, but Grbavica's tower blocks claimed the most lives by far — and justice will be done. It is not clear whether the United Nations tribunal in The Hague will classify Vladimir Cosic and his fellow snipers as war criminals. Bosnian judges are not likely to have many doubts.

Shells are deadly, but sniping is personal: the killer chooses his victim

Yesterday, Grbavica came out on to the street to add its furious voice to the other Serb districts calling for the Dayton map to be changed to let them stay Serb. Young men and women burnt mock copies of the agreement, and stamped on the US flag.

There was talk of the Sarajevo Defence Movement, a local militia which has vowed to defend the Serb suburbs against the government and, if necessary, Nato.

The podium was decorated with shrapnel sculpture and photographs of Serb victims. One man held aloft the photograph of a cheerful young boy, his dead son, killed by a government sniper.

Ida Trivonovic's father was also cut down by a government marksman, in December 1992. He was a Muslim who had stayed on the Serb side of the lines with his Serb wife. Ida now thinks of herself as entirely Serb and vows never to live with Muslims again. She thinks little of the Bosnian government's guarantees of safety.

"How can they say you will be safe, and not your boyfriend who carried a gun?" she said.

Bitter harvest . . . Serbs in Grbavica destroy a United States flag during a protest yesterday against the Dayton peace deal PHOTOGRAPH: ENRIC MARTI

Meeting aims to put peace into practice

Ian Black
Diplomatic Editor

INTERNATIONAL commitment to a settlement in Bosnia faces its next crucial test in London today, with Britain urging an immediate cash injection for short-term rehabilitation work to underline the benefits of peace.

Officials said it was hoped to raise £10-15 million during the two-day "implementation conference", which will be mainly devoted to working out political mechanisms and priorities for reconstruction.

Foreign ministers from more than 40 countries and the heads of a dozen international organisations, including Boutros Boutros-Ghali of the United Nations, are meeting at Lancaster House to translate into practice the civilian aspects of last month's Dayton peace deal.

It is not a pledging conference — that comes later, along with one on arms control — but diplomats want rapid results to maintain momentum and bring real benefits to ordinary Bosnians.

Some 20 urgent projects have been identified on which work could begin at once, such as restoring electricity to hospitals in Tuzla, opening more railway lines and mending Gorazde's sewage system.

"If peace is going to hold people have got to see some jam soon," said one British official. "The international community has got to understand that some projects might not look big and exciting from here, but they are to people in Sarajevo."

Vital political decisions need to be taken to set the scene for the most ambitious reconstruction project undertaken in Europe since the end of the second world war.

Britain wants to emphasise the practical, nuts and bolts nature of the two-day event, in contrast to the pomp expected at next week's signing ceremony in Paris.

One key move, expected during the first session, will be the appointment of Carl Bildt, the European Union's Balkan mediator, as the "high representative" stipulated by the Dayton accord to co-ordinate non-military activity.

Another will be the formation of a steering committee expanding the old five-state Contact Group of the United States, Russia, Britain, France and Germany, to take in countries such as Japan and Saudi Arabia, which are likely to be big donors to the reconstruction effort. The UN is not being offered a place.

John Major will open the conference, to be chaired by the Foreign Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind. Humanitarian issues will be discussed — including the key questions of refugees and the 2.7 million displaced people, as well as elections and reconstruction.

The main financial co-ordinating role is to be played by the World Bank, with estimates for the total cost of rebuilding Bosnia ranging from $2 billion to $8 billion. Officials say several hundred million dollars will be needed for the first few mouths alone.

One of the most important features of the London conference will be working out how civilian and military activities are to be co-ordinated, with an unprecedented Nato-led operation — Ifor — replacing the UN force in Bosnia.

Relief organisations are anxious to ensure that military movements will not hamper winter aid deliveries.

Some of these problems came under preliminary scrutiny in Geneva yesterday in talks involving General Bernard Janvier, commander of UN peace forces in former Yugoslavia, Kofi Annan, special representative for former Yugoslavia and special representative to Nato, UN mediator Thorvald Stoltenberg and Sadako Ogata, UN High Comissioner for Refugees.

Raising the dead, page 9

Pasok riven by power battle

Helena Smith in Athens

AS THE once loyal protégés of Andreas Papandreou jostle to succeed him as prime minister, Greeks are witnessing intrigue on a scale best known to their Byzantine forebears, with his wife still a powerful force in deciding the outcome.

"Everyone is wheeling and dealing around his bedside while he fights for his life," a party insider said. "It has become very decadent and very tragic."

In a central branch of the ruling Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok) yesterday, two staunch supporters were locked in the kind of debate that is threatening to tear the party apart.

"If Costas Simitis [the pro-European former industry minister] gets the post I will hand in my party membership," said Nikos, a language teacher, knocking back a glass of retsina. "All these would-be leaders are just a hair in the head of Andreas Papandreou. They don't have his charisma or talent."

But it is Mr Papandreou's divide-and-rule approach which may spell the end of the fractious party. "There will be great differences and some may leave because we don't all fit under the same umbrella," said Kostas Skandalides, the party's secretary-general. "The issue is not who will be the next prime minister, but what kind of government he will form."

Mr Papandreou, aged 76, has been on life support systems for the past three weeks. But his inner court — governed by his wife Dimitra Liani, popularly known as Mimi — has made no secret that it wants to lead the "post-Papandreou" era. "They are determined to keep him alive as long as possible so that they can control political developments," a senior socialist said.

"Mrs Liani wants to keep on Akis Tsochadzopoulos [the acting prime minister] and have her husband rule, if only in name. There are even rumours that she has her eye on the Pasok leadership," he added.

What is emerging is that as her husband's chief-of-staff, Mrs Papandreou, aged 40, tried to build a power-base through favours and patronage.

"Important people may not like her, but they have become her hostage," another leading socialist said. "She simply knows too many secrets."

The current front-runners in a leadership contest are Mr Simitis, aged 59, known for his pragmatic views, and Gerasimos Arsenis, the defence minister, aged 58.

Belgium's fight against rabies invasion takes the biscuit

Stephen Bates in Brussels

HALF a century after the Germans launched an attack on the advancing Allies at the Battle of the Bulge, the same ground in the Ardennes forest of eastern Belgium is again under bombardment. This time it is with dog biscuits.

Precision helicopter bombing raids are being mounted on foxholes in an attempt to curb an outbreak of rabies.

The Belgian National Veterinary Inspectorate has organised the campaign, tossing dog biscuits impregnated with vaccine into fox runs in the hope of heading off the disease. They want passing foxes to nibble the biscuits and acquire immunity to rabies.

Earlier unsuccessful attempts to kill the foxes with Zyklon-B, the nerve gas used in Nazi concentration camps, caused a public outcry. An attempt to vaccinate the foxes using chicken heads laced with a less sophisticated compound failed too.

Although no human has died from rabies in Belgium since the 1920s, cases among animals in the Ardennes have risen from two in 1993 to 200 this year. An invasion of German foxes is blamed for the increase.

Terrifying visions of infected foxes lurching across the country are being conjured up. There are dire predictions of what could happen if urban foxes carry the disease into Brussels, the dog-pampering capital of western Europe, where pet pooches wander at will into food shops and even sit on chairs in restaurants.

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Euro-sceptics urge clear party line before election

PM stands firm on single currency

Michael White
Political Editor

JOHN MAJOR rejected the promptings of rightwing Euro-sceptics yesterday to put "clear blue water" between the Conservatives and Labour in the coming election campaign by ruling out British membership of a single European currency in the lifetime of this parliament — and the next.

It was not enough to prevent veiled criticism of the Government's tough stance on greater European integration from such colleagues as the former prime minister, Sir Edward Heath.

Echoing Labour warnings against isolationism for domestic political reasons, Sir Edward told the Commons: "If one is negotiating satisfactorily, then one knows that if one wants to get one's way then of course you have to negotiate with other people about what they regard as their interests."

Endorsing a single currency and the social chapter, he said: "This is what negotiation is all about. And trying to say 'this is our interest, and that's that', is just not a means of negotiation."

Although Mr Major's words did not altogether preclude a later shift, Tony Blair, the Labour leader, seized it during question time as a highly significant parliamentary exchange.

Pressed by Mr Blair about Whitehall's agnostic position during the 1997-2002 parliament, when France and Germany may succeed in achieving a single currency, Mr Major said: "That is still the Government's position, as I have made clear on a number of occasions."

The exchange came after pro-European Tory MEPs launched a new campaign for a more positive attitude towards an "open, democratic Europe" as part of next year's review of the European Union's institutions at the inter-governmental conference (IGC) on the Maastricht treaty, due to start next spring.

The campaign was overshadowed by a confirmation by Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, that the cabinet may publish a white paper on its options for the IGC, notably its resistance to greater majority voting or enhanced powers for the European Parliament.

Tory sceptics, who have been among those demanding a white paper to "pin down" the Government, were thrilled. But Mr Rifkind, who later clashed with Robin Cook, Labour's shadow foreign secretary, in the Commons, saw it as a low-key, pragmatic decision.

So did the MEPs, who advised ministers to "save their fire". Instead they unveiled a package of improvements which would make the EU's institutions work better, especially if it grows beyond the current 15 members.

In the Commons debate on the IGC, Mr Cook and some pro-EU Tory MPs, including Sir Edward, attacked the Major-Rifkind insistence that there must be no further erosion of the national veto despite the need for reforms if a larger EU is to be effective.

Mr Rifkind's formula meant "a Slovakian veto, a Bulgarian veto, certainly a Maltese veto", Mr Cook said.

He conceded there were times when standing alone was necessary, and challenged Mr Rifkind to get his own European policy passed unanimously by a party conference, as Mr Cook had done with Labour.

● Pierre Forterre, aged 55, a French cavalryman whose latest command was of the prestigious St-Cyr military academy, has been appointed head of the 50,000-strong Eurocorps, the EU's proposed defence arm, defence sources said yesterday. He replaces General Helmut Willman of Germany, who becomes commander of the Germany army in January.

Zum Wohl and santé . . . Germany's chancellor, Helmut Kohl, and the French president, Jacques Chirac, toast each other at their bilateral summit in Baden-Baden yesterday, where they firmed up their commitment to further European integration PHOTOGRAPH: WINFRIED ROTHERMEL

European commissioners come clean by publishing their business interests

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE European Commission took a palsied step towards open government yesterday by publishing for the first time a register of the 20 commissioners' business interests.

It proved to be a gesture of openness that even a Conservative MP might be able to support. Under the threat from the European parliament of losing their travel allowances in the New Year, the commissioners — who include Sir Leon Brittan and Neil Kinnock — agreed to publish their outside financial interests.

Their entries were read out by Klaus van der Pas, the commission's senior press spokesman, in his office to journalists, who were not allowed to take away copies.

The commissioners — who each earn in the region of £160,000 a year, tax free — were obliged to reveal any boardroom positions, any financial stakes in companies amounting to more than 5 per cent of the capital and any professional links with firms which had been investigated by the commission.

The questions were less searching than those for Westminster MPs, who are allowed outside earnings but have to disclose all directorships, consultancies and shareholdings.

Commissioners are not supposed to earn money from outside sources, except the royalties from books published with the approval of the president of the commission or travel expenses that would otherwise have come out of the community budget.

None had any such declaration to make. Jacques Santer, the commission president, disclosed that he had only a family home in Luxembourg.

Ten of his colleagues, including Mr Kinnock and Sir Leon, were able to answer negatively to all three questions.

Mario Monti, the Italian commissioner responsible for the international market and taxation, disclosed that he had held directorships at Fiat, Banca Commerciale and IBM Italia, but he had given all that up on moving to the Commission.

Marcelino Oreja, the Spanish commissioner covering institutional affairs, culture, and the media, admitted that he had formerly been on the boards of the Banco Guipuzcoano, Cementas Portland Valderibas and Papeles Scott Iberica, but he was not on them any more.

Frustrated Paris commuters get on their bikes

Strike turmoil has produced a camaraderie among commuters as public transport grinds to a halt, **Paul Webster** reports

BICYCLES have been draped like Christmas decorations along park and public building railings during the past few days — proof that the public transport strike has revived Parisian passion for la petite reine, the little queen.

"There is a serious parking problem in certain areas because there aren't any free railings to lock on to," said Jean-François Bidault, a mathematics student who had pedalled 15 miles from the northern suburbs to join a university war council. "Sometimes we're so many cyclists at the traffic lights you'd think we were in downtown Peking."

After a fortnight without trains, some bicycle stores are looking for new stocks during a record sales boom, while rental firms have turned away thousands of customers.

The lure of a two-wheeler is so strong that an airline company, Air Liberté, is lending bicycles to customers.

The VeloSolex, that once demoded stripped down moped with an engine up front, has also had a new lease of life.

But according to Louise Beauvais, who had set out at 6am to reach her import-export office in Montparnasse, even bicycles find it difficult to get through grid-locked crossroads like the Place de la Concorde. "There isn't even a handlebar gap between cars, and even when you get a free pavement you have to share it with roller skaters and motor-cyclists — oh, and pedestrians," she said.

At the Decathlon sports emporium near the Arc de Triomphe, a mechanic broke off from mending a puncture to say that he had seen more old bicycles in the first days of the strike than had been traded in for years.

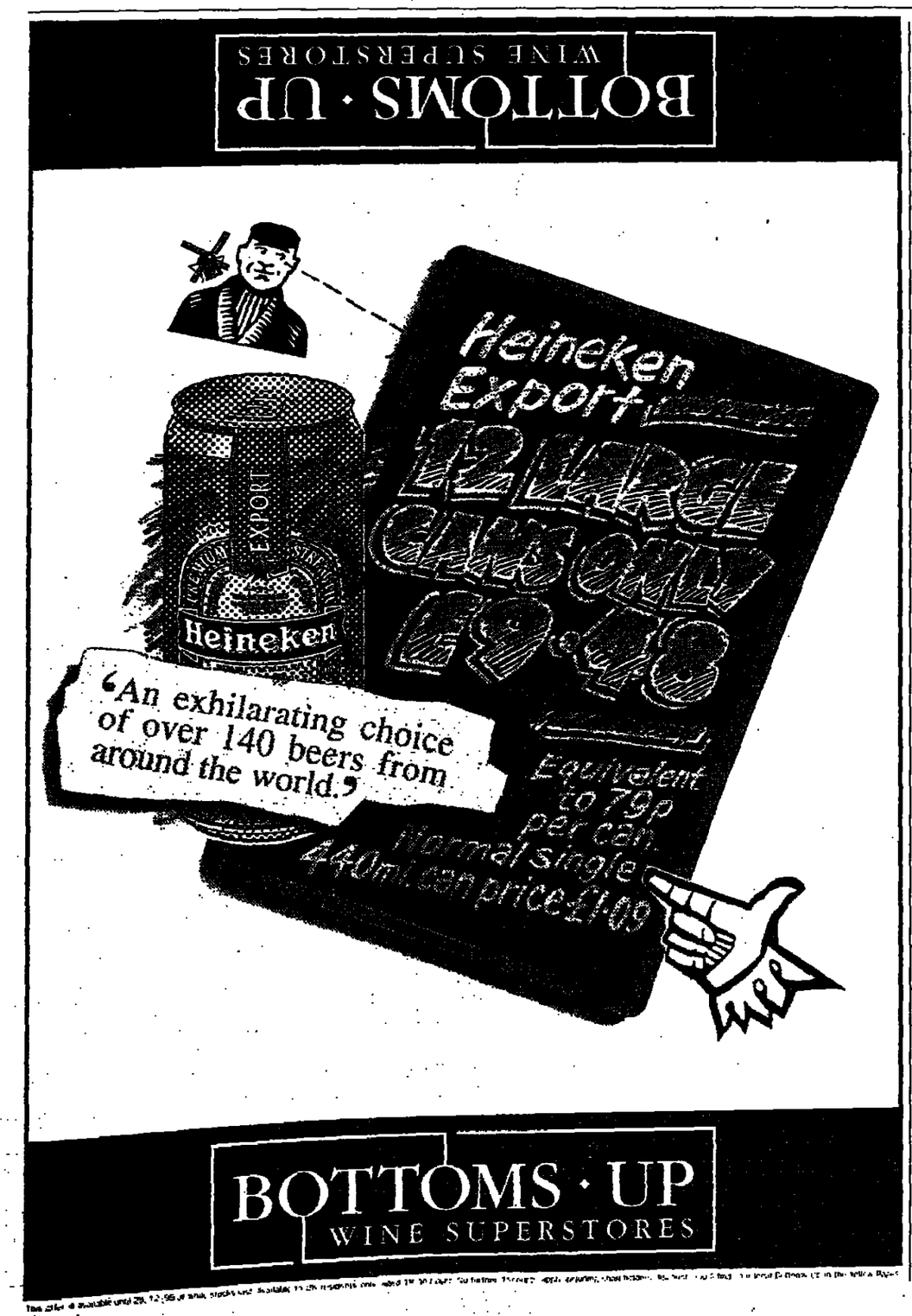
"Then there was terrible rush for new models, especially mountain bikes," he said. "Sales doubled and then trebled, especially for anything around 2,000 francs (£270). After that, it was smart fittings and equipment — just have a look at the passing parade."

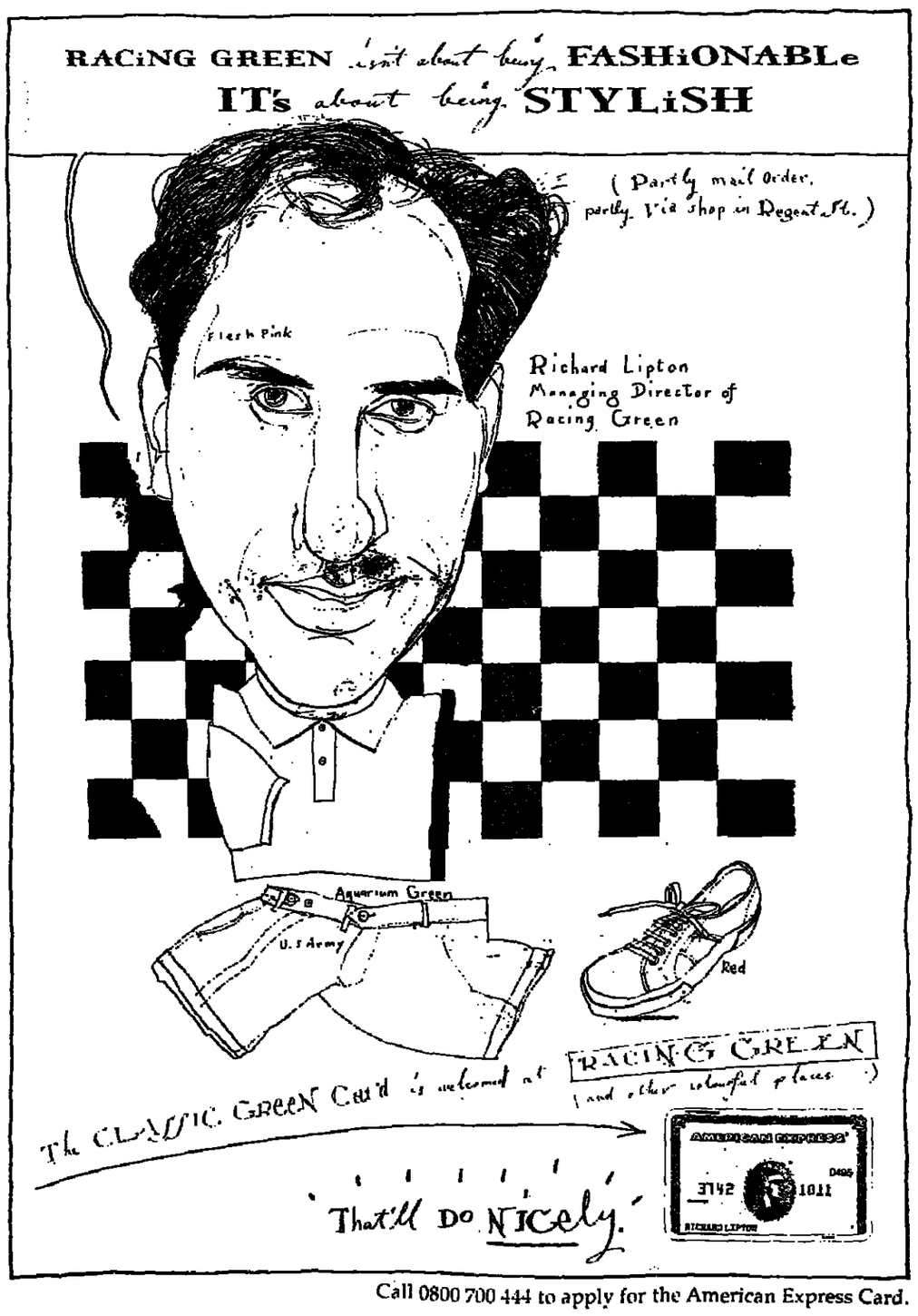
At the Firmanent cafe near the Opéra there was a general feeling that the camaraderie of hardship had temporarily united rival road users. Drivers, who sometimes leave notes in their cars giving their homeward route to help hitchhikers, felt envy for cyclists but were sorry for public transport users.

> 'The decision to charter 1,700 private buses has been a false hope'

"The government decision to charter 1,700 private buses to deal with commuter traffic has been a false hope," a Bank of France clerk said. He had spent four hours in a bus grinding through motorway jams from the western suburbs, and was already planning his way home. "The only consolation is that you don't have to wait to get served today. Restaurants are empty because of staff shortages."

In fact, the main customers were women, some of whom claimed they had struggled to work by bicycle or on foot while their husbands stayed home to look after the children. One office worker said that most of the cyclists were women because their husbands kept the car.





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The **Guardian**
Friday December 8 1995
Edition Number 46,419
119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER
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Mad cows and Englishmen

We should listen to the scientists, not the politicians

ARE "mad cow" warnings just another media scare? Sceptics have plenty of arguments to defend their continued consumption of beef. Scientists have always been sceptical about the capacity of diseases to leap from one species to another. Mad sheep disease (scrapie) has been around for 200 years without infecting man, so why should mad cow disease be any different? A decade after BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) was identified in cattle, the number of deaths from its human counterpart, CJD (Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease) was only 55 last year. That represents one death per million people in Britain, roughly the same ratio as in continental countries with no BSE. Indeed, Austria which has no BSE has a higher CJD death rate than Britain. Moreover, since tighter restrictions were applied six years ago to cattle feed and infected cows, new BSE cases in Britain have dropped from 1,000 to 300 a week. So why is so much fuss being made of a disease which kills only 55 annually compared to cancer's 166,000 or 200,000 from heart disease?

Ministers continue to insist that beef is safe. Scientists disagree. A survey of 16 leading scientists found seven already taking precautions — some refusing to eat any form of beef but others just avoiding beefburgers, mince or meat pies. Being scientists, none was as assertive as ministers. They concede doubts remain whether BSE can infect man. But we already know that mad cow was caused by feeding mad sheep material to cattle. So scrapie has already jumped one species — and is thought to have infected cats and several different zoo animals. Worse still, even though critical parts of cow and sheep offal are now banned from human food, the ban was only introduced in the late 1980s and some offal continued to leak into the food chain after the ban. Most worrying of all is the incubation period — between 10 and 40 years. People who ate infected meat in the late 1980s may not show signs of the disease until way into the milenium. Then, if the doomsday scenario proved right, biblical numbers could suffer loss of co-ordination, intellect and personality — just like the wobbly mad cows seen on television.

Ministers need to draw two lessons. First that disparaging scientists only erodes their already frail credibility. They need to remember that only 11 per cent of people in a survey conducted for the Nolan Commitee believed MPs told the truth. When a junior agriculture minister is encouraged to challenge one of the country's most eminent authorities on brain disease, Sir Bernard Tomlinson, the only people ending up looking foolish are ministers not the professor. Sir Bernard, who has been a respected government adviser, began the new scare when he told the BBC's You and Yours programme that he had changed his mind and believed BSE "might" be linked to CJD. Ministers should stop being so ridiculously confident. There may not be a link but there are genuine scientific worries. The Health Secretary was just plain silly to declare there is "no conceivable risk". Sensibly, the public is listening to the scientists, not the politicians.

Secondly, agriculture ministers need to tackle the root cause of BSE: intensive farming. The Government still believes it can clean up the food chain by quick fixes — food irradiation or bans on infected meat — but it can't. It has to be tackled at every link: producer, abattoir, processor, distributor, retailer and consumer. Turning vegetarian animals into meat eaters was asking for trouble. It is time ministers looked at other intensive — and equally hazardous — farming methods. Whitehall must separate "food" from "agriculture" to ensure the consumer comes first.

Unhappy 20th anniversary

The issue in East Timor is one of elementary human rights

EAST TIMORESE commemorate two anniversaries this week on successive days. Yesterday, December 7, was the 20th anniversary of the full-scale invasion of their country when Indonesian Marines stormed in. The other anniversary was 24 hours earlier when President Ford left Jakarta having done nothing to dissuade General Suharto while Henry Kissinger told journalists that the US "fully understands Indonesia's position". No one really believed Jakarta's claim that the Fretilin independence movement was about to impose its "communist clutches". But the Suharto regime had earned its cold-war merit points over the previous decade by physically eliminating hundreds of thousands of real communists — as well as equal numbers who were random victims. The sufferings of a small former colonial people in the remote far east of the Indonesian archipelago were hardly noticed at the time and soon completely forgotten. A few Western commentators who did remember were ridiculed — notably Noam Chomsky for daring to suggest that East Timor had become as much a killing field as Cambodia.

So matters might have remained but for a single TV camera at the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili five years ago. A new generation of young Timorese, only vaguely aware of the small guerrilla struggle conducted by Fretilin survivors in the hills, had launched their own protest against Indonesian harassment and intimidation. The massacre obliged Western countries to make a minimum response. The slaughter in Dili had to be condemned, while accepting Indonesian excuses and without drawing any broader conclusion which might affect future relations with Jakarta.

East Timor is now in a similar predicament to that faced by Tibet. It is not so much an abstract question of sovereignty. It is an issue of elementary human rights which can only be achieved by the withdrawal of outside military forces and granting genuine self-rule to the indigenous population. If the "all-inclusive" talks under UN sponsorship are to be held, this has to be on the agenda.

For the past two decades Indonesian rigidity has been compounded by the lack of external pressure. Even after Dili, countries such as Britain and Australia have argued against portraying Jakarta as a "bad boy". But selling "dual-use" weapons to Indonesia (Britain), or collaborating in oil exploitation in the Timor Gap (Australia) is to pretend that it is a very good boy. Indonesian assurances on the use of weapons supplied to them are worthless. There should be energetic support for the UN human rights high commissioner Ayala Lasso — now visiting Dili. Nor should Portugal be the only country to offer asylum to East Timorese protesters. East Timor will remain in an oppressive time-warp unless the outside world can convince Indonesia that a 20-year denial of rights is too long.

The grand old Duchess of York

A moving tale of Budgie, a thief and a girl's best friend

THE nation will rejoice that the Duchess of York has been re-united with her four-piece diamond set. It is never pleasant to be summarily deprived of one's jewelry, and all credit is due to the FBI for its swift work in tracking down the necklace set to the garden shed of Gilbert Terrero, a 19-year old baggage handler from Queen's. Mr Terraro is said to have consulted his sister Wanda about the value of the sparklers. Wanda reportedly commented that they looked like cheap glass but nevertheless thought it prudent to compare them to similar pieces in a Macy's store catalogue. She concluded they, at most, were worth "300 bucks."

It is not clear that, at this stage, Ms Terrero knew the identity of the owner of the jewels. They were stolen from the baggage of one Jane Dunn-Butler, described as the "dresser" of the Duchess. She was travelling on a scheduled BA flight. Such was the pressure of her work promoting Budgie the Helicopter giftwear that the Duchess was forced to race home ahead on Concorde. In any event, how would Ms Terrero be expected to know of the Queen's munificence in giving such gifts to her nearest and dearest? Experts have valued the necklace set — a wedding present bought at Garrard's — at anything between £60,000 and £250,000. Possibly Ms Terrero does not know many brides of her age who receive gifts of this order from their future mother-in-laws. Similarly, there would not be many 26-year old newly-weds in her neighbourhood who are given $8 million to build a new house. How was Wanda to know that you can't buy this stuff at Macy's?

The Queen may reasonably respond that this was her private money and she can spend it how she likes. Few would dispute that. Rather, the saga should be read as touching glimpse of one family's generosity to its own.

Letters to the Editor

Fact: scientists are people too

GEORGE Monbiot (Mad scientist disease, December 5) seems to lay the blame for this country's ills squarely on the shoulders of its scientists. But the person who first recognised that short, weak plant fibre could be twisted to form a strong rope was not the one totally responsible for the subsequent lynch parties.

My own scientific colleagues divided into theoretical, experimental or evaluation groups. When the theoretician is convincing he is "known" to be right; when the experimentalist measures the new parameter at issue, both he and the theoreticians "know" he is right; when the evaluator examines the available data on the new parameter, he "knows" he is wrong but he knows by how much.

I agree that the scientific conscience is under-employed because of managerial funding. But this is hardly the scientists' fault: they do not sponsor the evaluation. The evaluators act as the scientific conscience; the Government and its management strategies must answer for the use to which the information is put.
Alan L Pope.
32 Rothesay Road,
Dorchester, Dorset DT1 2DU.

SINCE George Monbiot uses our research to epitomise his hatred of genetic engineering and science, we would like to correct him on errors of fact. Luminous plants were constructed in 1991 for reasons closely connected with a need for knowledge of environmental stress effects on crop growth. But their primary agricultural use, as we described it, will be to reduce the necessity for much agrochemical application to crops. Maybe Monbiot would regard that as evil; but we do not believe the public will complain that there are fewer chemicals in their food supply and drinking water.

Scientists are responsible people too; we strongly share the desire of all to live in a clean, safe environment. The only Frankenstein in the story is the product of fevered imaginations, a fear of the future, ignorance and resistance to knowledge.
Anthony Trewavas.
Marc Knight.
c/o University of Edinburgh.
Mayfield Road,
Edinburgh EH9 3JH.

IT IS not so much that scientists have cut themselves off from other people's lives and other disciplines. It is more that non-scientists have completely abrogated any responsibility for science by refusing even to try to understand it. Name me an artist with even a rudimentary working knowledge of a range of scientific disciplines.
Daloni Carlisle.
23B Grosvenor Road,
Twickenham, Middx TW1 4AD.

THE scientists I knew as research colleagues and teachers 20 and 30 years ago were cultivated, open-minded people, who read books, played music and were concerned with education and politics. If there has been a change in the last 20 years to produce narrow-minded dunces, there has also been a reduction in funding of science research and education. Scientists are forced to spend large chunks of time grubbing for finance, or applying for the next short contract. Meanwhile, education has become a poor cousin to vocational training.
Susan Craggs.
13 Riverside Walk,
Little Neston, S Wirral L64 0TT.

WHAT about the genetically engineered plants that are resistant to disease or insect attack? And Monbiot describes how genes from jellyfish can be transferred to plants, but he does not discuss the ways that these genes are helping us to work out new ways of producing plants resistant to fungi and viruses.
David C Baulcombe.
The Sainsbury Laboratory,
Norwich Research Park,
Colney, Norwich NR4 7UH.

IF, as scientists and legislators, we are less cautious today, preparing the way for the release of genetically-engineered bacteria, plants and animals into the environment, it is because 20 years' research has shown that the natural world employs its own checks and controls to limit the uncontrolled proliferation of "mutants"; and that an awful lot of gene-shuffling goes on in nature anyway. The respected molecular biologist, S B Primrose, has stated: "The evidence to date suggests that no new infectious agent has been created accidentally and it is difficult to perceive of anything more virulent than the naturally occurring Marburg agent, or Lassa-fever virus."
Christopher Oldfield.
Napier University,
Edinburgh.

The duchess and Iron Johns

TROLLOPE presents Lizzie Eustace (Letters, December 7) as a striking young woman, primarily concerned with securing her own position financially and socially, and prepared to compromise herself with a range of men, for immediate gratification. There can be no grounds for linking her with our dear duchess.
H Margaret Markwick.
10 Northfield Avenue,
Taunton TA1 1XF.

YOU say "smut" is not typical of Fleur Adcock's oeuvre (Pass Notes, December 7). Couldn't you find her most famous poem, Against Coupling? "Five minutes of solitude are/ enough — in the bath or to fill/ the gap between the Sunday papers and lunch." Yes, it is. And in Morning After, her dream enters unpleasantly sexual territory. On waking, she says: "Enough, enough. Bring back those easy pictures,/ Tibet or antelopes or a seemly lover" (Enter John Prescott?).
Peter Forbes.
Editor, Poetry Review.
22 Betterton Street,
London WC2H 9BU.

I AM flattered to be considered by Michael Billington a candidate for the National Theatre; but Jane Horrocks's remark about my "rightwing politics" was meant as an ironic joke, not a revelation of my secret desires to become the Michael Portillo of Theatreland. I would prefer to be clear about my lack of support for a government that has been so consistently destructive to the arts.
Sam Mendes.
Donmar Warehouse,
41 Earlham Street,
London WC2H 9LD.

WOULDN'T it be easier now to have a single European Currency for everyone except the Germans?
John Heawood.
20 Eastward Avenue,
Fulford, York YO1 4LZ.

ON your "ages of man" (G2, December 4) series: what a relief! I don't have to rethink my attitudes to men; they're every bit as boring and predictable as I'd supposed.
Phyllis Rodinsky.
Charlton, London SE7 7JX.

WHY should Yvonne Roberts (Letters, December 7) assume that the sports, business, news and comment pages are only for men? Surely a rather sexist assumption.
John Gibson.
33 Harlequin Lodge,
Felling, Tyne & Wear.

More beef cuts

THOSE of your readers who have chosen to remove British beef and beef products from their diet should be made aware that many apparently innocuous products contain beef as a major ingredient. A leading brand of chicken stock cube contains beef bone stock as its major ingredient (it also contains less chicken than salt). Beef stock is also used in the manufacture of lamb stock cubes and gravy granules.

I have written to two major food companies asking for a list of their products which do not contain British beef products. I have not had a reply although one company has stated that its lamb stock cubes contain beef from outside the UK.

I encourage consumers to read the label of all food items they purchase and if they have any doubts to ask the company involved for further information. If no reply is obtained, it might be safer to avoid that particular item.
(Dr) P Williams.
Bacup Health Centre,
Yorkshire Street,
Bacup, Lancs OL13 9AL.

THE Chief Medical Officer, Dr Kenneth Calman, certifies that "British Beef is perfectly safe to eat". Could he tell us whether both the disease BSE and Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease could be caused by organo-phosphate pesticides? Also, the names of the pesticides and their manufacturers that British cows are usually treated with. Finally, could he please publish the currently acceptable levels of pesticide residues in British beef and milk?
Andrew Orolin.
29 Hemstal Road,
London NW6 2AB.

GOVERNMENT ministers believe British beef is perfectly safe to eat. They are entitled to believe what they like, including that the Moon is made of green cheese and that the Earth is flat. The real question is: where is their evidence?
P Bray.
45 Bluebell Meadow,
Winnersh, Wokingham,
Berks RG41 5UW.

IS there any truth in the rumour that one can contract BSE or CJD by eating alphabet soup?
Doug Meredith.
34 Belhaven Road,
Manchester M8 4NR.

Short-sighted in the extreme

I WRITE to complain about the advertisement for Philips CD-i (December 2) headed: "Access to the internet for those who don't wear jam-jar glasses or anoraks". The word *anorak* has been established by the media as shorthand for a person who is fair game for derision and abuse because of his social inadequacy, obsessive behaviour and unprepossessing appearance.

The ad invites similar "fun" at the expense of those whose poor eyesight requires them to wear heavy glasses. My wife and myself have both worn glasses since schooldays. I am myopic and my wife is hypermetropic.

I realise that the advertisement was meant to be humorous: so are Bernard Manning's Paki "jokes". The Guardian is a quality newspaper with a reputation for supporting minorities, Philips a brand name to trust. I don't expect this kind of thing from either.
Gordon Peter Duff.
Binsted Croft,
Sheffield,
South Yorkshire S5 8NX.

Caring, not Carey, is the family way

DR GEORGE CAREY (Vows and values, December 7) confuses Christian practice with family and parenting — both of which predate Christianity. A couple who have a child are already required to register its birth, and themselves as the parents. Isn't that enough to show that they are involved in wider society and that they accept their share of responsibility?

Or is he saying we should do it through the Church because the "Church's firm teaching is that the institution of marriage is at the heart of family life...'"? Those of us who are not married have a family life no better or worse than if we were.

Dr Carey should also note that marriage did not, and does not, stop sexual exploitation. That only ends when people respect each other's rights and independence within a caring community.

Marriage is important to those who wish to marry, but I would argue is irrelevant to those who don't. What is important for parenting and happy families is love, respect and support. Neither marriage nor co-habiting will guarantee those, but if society could devise better family policies, and if we show a little more tolerance and understanding, it would help.
Clive Soley MP.
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

THAT couples rely on society in a thousand ways is reason, according to Dr Carey, for couples to engage in public marriage rather than privately cohabiting. Well, individuals rely on society in a thousand ways, therefore ought there not to be some public commitment to singularity rather than privately living alone? This would offer considerable scope for religious and societal anguishing over those singles who dare to resist making such public singleness declarations.

Dr Carey also argues that marital fidelity is essential because sex severed from total commitment can cause personal pain, exploitation, indignity and social breakdown. It could equally well be argued that marital infidelity is essential because sex based solely on total commitment can cause — well — personal pain, exploitation, indignity and social breakdown.
Peter Cave.
The Mount,
London NW3.

No fabrication

SIMON Hoggart's frequent mentions of me in his parliamentary sketches are heart-warming, though a number of Labour frontbench spokesmen have asked me why they are being ignored.

But I assure Mr Hoggart that I have absolutely no intention of using the epithet "doctor" before my name. In my experience, those using "doctor" who are not working academics or medical practitioners tend to be pompous bores (with a few notable exceptions). Indeed, when I first entered the House, I resisted the advice of a helpful whip who advised me to call myself "Dr Michael Fabricant". He said it would help me get noticed. I have been compensating ever since.

Still, as ever, I appreciate Simon's enthusiasm for broadcasting my qualities and hope that the Government frontbench reads his column as avidly as I do. And just for the record: the doctorate was in econometrics.
Michael Fabricant MP.
House of Commons,
London SW1A 0AA.

A Country Diary

GLOUCESTERSHIRE: Our hay supplier, the estimable Mr Bracher, was delivering a small load of hay for us on Saturday morning. In the light of extended grass-growth through a mild autumn, I was relieved to note that prices had eased. September prices, before rain came in the nick of time to give a lush recovery of autumn grass, had promised very high price levels because, at the end of the summer heat, a lot of pastureland was eaten out. Hay prices usually touch their peak in March but September had already seen the £5 bale. Demand will certainly have eased through good autumn grazing. Mr Bracher, who runs his own large flock of Texel cross ewes lower down the Vale of Berkeley, is always interested in our flock of Herdwicks. As a breed native to Lakeland, they have a degree of novelty value in the softer south. They don't seem all that evident in their homeland for that matter. In two recent return trips to Glasgow, a drive which takes you on the M6 right through Cumbria, I saw not a single Herdwick on the fells visible from the road. Mr Bracher pointed out, with the eye of the experienced shepherd, that our ram Saul, a learner in his first season, was having certain technical difficulties in completing his commission with the ewes this tupping season. The ewes need dagging — the clipping of their tail and rear wool to give the ram a chance of fertilising them as they come into season. Mr Bracher is returning to complete the task this week. So we might get lambs as late as May next year. Which, although late, is within the bounds of normality. We saw new-born lambs in Devon in late November and this interference with the natural rhythm of the ewe is achieved, chemically, by bringing her into season in mid-summer by an artificial stimulant. On a mild day in November they seemed frisky enough but a hard winter will cause some losses I imagine. It's all about selling lamb at top prices — not a game we need to engage in, I am relieved to recognise.

COLIN LUCKHURST

هكذا من الاصل

مكتبة الأمل

Diary

Matthew Norman

YESTERDAY, alas, was another red back day for Paul Dacre, the mannerly Daily Mail editor with the engaging habit, when under stress, of digging his nails into his back. And stress rarely comes in a richer mixture than yesterday's. First, he learned that Ian Monk, his fearsome number three, will be Richard Addis's deputy at the Daily Express; and then admired features executive Chris Williams walked out when denied a promotion. Mr Williams will say nothing, but it is conceivable that he too may join Mr Dacre's direct rival. "It's absolute chaos here," said one Mail hack with glee. "Lawyers' letters are flying everywhere, and Dacre's gone completely beserk." To his credit, Mr Dacre eventually freed his arms from the straitjacket position, and called his favourite freelance moralists — former Goodie William Oddie among them — offering an instant £5,000 inducement to sign contracts barring them from writing for the Express. Let us pray they all accepted. The editor's back may not withstand too many more defections.

EVEN as the Dacre shirt was making its familiar journey to Sketchley's, Mr Addis was adding yet further to his staff. Mark "Biscuits" Palmer (the family are in business with the Huntleys) will join the Express as joint number three. In the 1970s, Biscuits enjoyed a spell as a Moonie. Mr Addis, meanwhile, was once a novice monk. Other imminent appointments are believed to include Maria von Trapp (lobby correspondent), Jackie Mason (home affairs) and Yusuf Islam (theatre critic). Grasshopper from Kung Fu is considering the leader-writing job turned down on Monday by David Icke.

I AM intrigued by a letter from defence minister James Arbuthnot to Labour's Tony Heath about an exhibition of British military weapons. Mr Heath had asked the minister's predecessor whether a certain African country had been invited, and been told that it had not. This reply, it transpires, was a mistake. "It has always been the practice," writes Mr Arbuthnot, "not to answer questions about who has or has not been invited, because the invitations are issued on a confidential basis." Who can say which is more touching to behold: the immediate impact of the drive for "open government", or the Government's eagerness to spare the Nigerian military regime any embarrassment?

AS is reported elsewhere, the Daily Telegraph yesterday ran an inaccurate front-page story (run unchecked in later editions, incidentally, by that paper of record, the Times) about the Lord Chancellor. We may never know where details of Lord Mackay's phantasmal reprimand to judges (for overturning ministerial decisions) originated, but whispers implicate the Home Office. These whispers must stop. Shortly before he instucted her never to speak to a journalist again, Mrs Hilda Howard told me that her son is incapable of such naughtiness. "He could never tell a lie or do anything devious," she said, "and he's a wonderful son. But I do worry terribly about his colds." So then, no more malicious nonsense about Mr Howard, if you please.

MR Howard, meanwhile, has recorded an early vote in the referendum to determine the male British resident (no more Ann Widdecombes or Mrs Bumleys, please) you would be most mortified to wake up besides after a long night out with Mr Smirnoff. Stacy Marking includes him at number two in a cricket team of one-night stands from hell captained by David Mellor. Others to win selection include Mark Thatcher, Clive James and my old friend Little Gum Gum, "in case, despite my cries of 'no', he thrusts a hamburger into my mouth." And you're worried about his *hamburger*, Stacy? Nominations, by fax or letter, to "Diary Plebiscite" at the usual address.

Shameful game of mocking the Frogs

Commentary

Peter Preston

IT'S THE sneering smugness that curdles your stomach. Here is France, nearest neighbour and oldest adversary, wallowing in the toils. And here are we, smirking behind our hands, gathering scraps of self-justification as the saga unfolds, seeking only to reflect Mr Juppé's dilemma through the prism of insular British debates. The winter of discontent all over again? The miners' strike? Or — ho! ho! ho! — the inevitable death of EMU's impossible dream?

Telly interviewers keep posing the same vapid question day after day. They have breakfasted on Rees-Mogg and cold porridge. Now Monsieur Whoever (happens to be standing before a camera in a chill Parisian street): Doesn't this inevitably mean the death of the European super-state delusion? And Monsieur, who hasn't read Smogg, shrugs blankly and talks about something entirely different. Of course a single currency is part of the action, one ingredient of the mix, one imperative for holding firm. Of course President Chirac — as opposed to our own beloved Prime Minister — mouthed all manner of duff promises on the election trail. Of course Alain Juppé made a sleazy start and lacks the deft, principled touch of — well, our own beloved Prime Minister. But can we please concentrate on the real story of France — and the real lessons — rather than any glib, passing thesis?

You may (because it clashes with Heartbeat) not have seen the first instalment of Labour's Wilderness Years on BBC2 last Sunday. You may also (London's Burning) have missed the second of Hugo Young's lucid Channel 4 dissertations on Britain and Europe. But, watched back to back, they were terrible testimony. The same cast of characters — Healey, Hattersley, Kaufman et al — describing with beady clarity the party-centred manoeuvrings and introversions which, time and again, turned issues like Europe into a pawn of convenience. Watch bluff old Jim Callaghan twisting the knife of anti-Europeanism for a howling party conference. Watch lucky Jim performing the charade of "renegotiation" and turtle utterly turned a couple of years later. Watch John Major squittering round today's burning party deck. Read the shifting phrases on Tony Blair's lips.

France, by contrast, has been a staunch model of consistency. France, wrecked twice by world war, determined to build something better with the perennial enemy, Germany. France was victim and counterweight. France — as a matter of bipartisan policy — locked itself into a deepening, democratic Europe. (So successfully that, this fraught week, nobody talks about French democracy at risk.) Monetary union, and ever increasing partnership with Bonn, aren't fleeting fancies. The strong franc, over years rather than months, has exacted a horrid price in unemployment and stunted growth. But Mitterrand and Chirac, Socialist and Gaullist, have both been prepared to pay that price.

Now Alain Juppé is presenting the final bill. Do not assume too easily that he is doomed to lose. Union membership in France is the smallest of any OECD country: much less than Britain percentage-wise. The story on the streets is not the whole story. There's no dominant TUC, but an agglomeration of squabbling power bases and shifty alliances. The private sector stands to one side. Within the public sector, fairness has nothing to do with it. (The *conductor* on a high-speed train earns four times as much as a schoolteacher.) If strikes are about cash, then cash is draining from the strikers' bank accounts every day. Greyer still, the inconvenience visited upon the general public also affects the strikers and their own families — scattered through communities rather than, like the miners, communities unto themselves.

A balance of odds and a battle of competing resolution. Neither side, in the nature of such struggles, will probably win absolutely. But Mr Juppé is going for broke. Have Thatcher or Major or Tony Blair (chuntering apart) moved to impose income tax and child benefits? Part of the French package. Do you remember Mrs T diving for cover over the means testing of university tuition fees? Juppé has left himself devoid of cover. He's doing the lot. You may think him berserkly apolitical (and possibly crass). But this is also what most of the British pundits who deride him would call strong leadership if it were delivered in their own backyard. They're the gang, remember, who flagellate Kenneth Clarke for not cutting public spending hard enough. They're the chorus who denounced British inflationary feebleness over the decades — then danced on the grave of the ERM.

> Alain Juppé is presenting the final bill. Do not assume too easily that he is doomed to lose

Perhaps France's tiny governing élite hasn't told the people the entire European truth — though there seemed to be a lot of it around at the referendum they (not we) held. Perhaps there is a gulf between governors and governed. (Just as in the rest of the western world.) Do not, however, turn this into a malign kind of football-crowd chant. Even today, the French and British growth rates are the same. France, from all its public spending, has cities and roads and railways to be proud of — not potholes and privatised chaos. Labour's new education policy speaks longingly of *catching up* with France. François Mitterrand filled his nation with memorable buildings whilst we were inventing the Millennium Fund. And the resolve to stick with Germany, to construct something better, has been grimly constant under relentless strain.

If the French didn't have such a reputation for insufferable pride, they'd have much to be proud of. Now, square on, comes one of those moments of accounting. Easy scope for jeers and sneers? Only if we have no self-perception, and no shame.

Such caring for the sisters' dreadful hurt

Bel Littlejohn

PEOPLE — ordinary people — have an annoying habit of getting in the way. God knows, I don't mean this in any pejorative anti-democratic or "Establishment" sense. But it gets up my nose that just when you're trying to escort a major figurehead of People Power — be it Jack Straw or Princess Diana — into a hospital for the terminally ill, the whole place is clogged up with "relatives" and "visitors" who really have no right to be there.

Let me explain. A fortnight ago, in a hauntingly memorable piece for this column, I stretched out a welcoming hug to the Princess of Wales ("She's hurting dreadfully, poor love... Welcome to the sisterhood, Diana."). Later the same day, I was in the middle of a top-secret New Labour education meeting, dotting the t's and crossing the i's on our "Thrashing It Out: Discipline In Schools For The 1990s" discussion document. Jack Straw was wondering aloud whether some system of electric-shock treatment at school, humanely administered by senior prefects, might not prove the best way to call a halt to the squeegee merchants.

Suddenly, a messenger arrived bearing a beautiful bouquet of flowers. The message was simple. "For Bel. A Wise Owl, from a Little Sparrow Who's Hurting Dreadfully. Diana." And at the very bottom there was a drawing of a lovely, lovely smiley face, with three layers of extra eyeliner added to the bottom of the eyes, and a great big soppy tear dropping down one cheek. Then there was a "PTO", and overleaf was the handwritten message: "The underprivileged need you, Bel — will you be a Caring Handmaiden to this Queen of Hearts? Call soon. D."

I nipped out to the telephone. "Her Royal Highness has been expecting your call, Ms Littlejohn," said the telephonist. For obvious reasons, I can't go into any great detail about the top-secret conversation that ensued — Kensington Palace has already promised The News Of The World the exclusive — but I am able to reveal that the Princess wanted to know all about my sisters in the media. "What about Linda Kelsey?" she asked. "Hurting dreadfully, poor love," I replied. "Marcelle d'Argy Smith?" "Hurting dreadfully." "Janet Street-Porter?" "Hurting dreadfully." "Eve Pollard?" "Hurting dreadfully." "And the lovely Anne Diamond?" "I'm afraid she's... hurting dreadfully."

And so my catalogue of sorrow went on. The last few months of 1995 have been a sore, sore time for women the world over, if the experience of editors of British glossy women's magazines is anything to go by. "Shall... I visit them?" suggested the Princess. "I just want them to know that there's someone there, someone who cares, someone who can share in their inner loneliness."

By the end of our secret talk, I had agreed to act as the Princess's unofficial Press Secretary, with special responsibility for publicising her Secret Caring Projects. "Let's make some Secret Caring trips to your women friends in the media first, Bel — have you rung the photographers yet?" she asked.

Within seconds, we were outside Janet Street-Porter's bedroom, waiting for her to come round. "Janet," I whispered, as the poor love opened her eyes and reached for her specs. "I've brought a friend along. It's the Queen of Hearts, our roving Ambassadress of Goodwill. She's joined the sisterhood. And now she wants to share your pain."

AND so it all flooded out: Janet's rows with the middle-aged men in grey suits, her fierce pride in shows like DEF-II, with its historic repeats of unjustly neglected episodes of Daktari and Mission Impossible, and the Male Establishment plot to prevent Janet from becoming Director General of BBC1. "It's the ordinary, decent people of the former Yugoslavia that I feel sorry for, Di," she whimpered, as the Princess held her hand and nodded sympathetically. "I mean, how are they going to get to hear great new bands like Blur when there's a war going on?"

"I'm sorry, I've got to go now, Janet, you mustn't hog me. But at least you know you're not alone. Everyone's on your side. That's except for the people who can't stand the sight of you. Must go. Love you!"

And with that the Princess nipped away, the Angel of the Night, off to Swiss Cottage to pay a caring bedside visit to the lovely Eve Pollard.

The next day, we put on our disguises of baseball hats with neon HRH insignia and made our way to a real London hospital in search of ordinary people who were dead or preferably dying. "Make way! Make way!" I yelled at the (male!) doctors who seemed to be clogging up the operating theatres. "The Queen of Hearts has arrived!" Once we were within caring distance of the body, I issued orders to the nurses. "Camera! Light meter! Film! Flash!"

It's a tough job being a Secret Carer, but she's doing it beautifully. Even if she's hurting dreadfully, poor love.

Now that the fighting has stopped, how do you start to build a new Bosnia with lasting peace? **James Gow** outlines a six-point plan for today's conference

How to raise the dead

THE FIGHTING in Bosnia is over. The world has the opportunity at the Bosnia implementation conference in London today to begin to build peace. To do this, assistance in implementing that peace must be seen as more than a technical and economic matter. It needs a clear political dimension.

This will be the largest and most significant reconstruction and rehabilitation process since 1945. The question the conference will face is whether Bosnia's future should be that of Germany in 1945, Italy in 1945, or a crippled country in which the conditions for further armed hostilities will emerge in the years ahead.

After the second world war, the Allies rebuilt a new kind of Germany. The same transformation did not occur in Italy, and the country became dominated economically and politically by corruption. According to one very senior military figure involved, the destruction in Bosnia is worse than that in Germany at the end of the second world war. The social and economic devastation may be greater.

Bosnia itself is smaller, but it is also sharply divided. Reintegration of the state must therefore be on the agenda today. So must the removal of the criminal and semi-criminal armed barons who dominated military and political affairs during the conflict. If they are not removed, wartime corruption will find a peacetime outlets.

After the horror of the past four years, most Bosnians would no doubt settle for an "Italian" future. It would certainly be better than further war. The implementation conference must do for Bosnia what was done for Germany in 1945 — thus removing any chance of a return to the past.

Reconstruction should be comprehensive. As I see it, it should come in six phases.

Phase 1: The Nato implementation force (I-for) This will be the easiest phase. Although I-for will probably face challenges, for the most part it should have a relatively unproblematic mission. It will deploy its 60,000 troops with a simple and clear mandate: to enforce the line of separation, using robust rules of engagement.

Further, although I-for will probably face some harassment in sensitive areas, it will be in no one's interest to return to armed hostilities because the military-political balance in the region rules out certain success. And people are war weary. It would be hard to justify a return to war when people wish to get on with life.

Phase 2: Rebuilding Bosnia This will mean restoring roads, railways, water and power supplies. It also means roofs on houses, windows in flats and tables and chairs to replace those used for firewood. Major international programmes will stimulate local recovery as reconstruction generates jobs.

Phase 3: Economic regeneration Resources will be available internationally — with the EU as lead organisation — which should be used effectively to promote economic growth and the development of the local economy through international trade and co-operation. Rebuilding Bosnia will be a great business opportunity for external investment and for Balkan private enterprise.

A judicious use of resources will also build on the logic of integration in Bosnia created by its communications and infrastructure — road, rail and basic utilities, as well as geographic and traditional characteristics. For example, Serb-dominated Banja Luka and Muslim-dominated Tuzla have continued to trade in spite of war. In peace, these patterns can be encouraged through the careful use of economic assistance. In short, we must help Bosnia knit itself back together through incentives in the right places.

Phase 4: Political reconstruction Assistance programmes must be used to make Bosnia a whole and vibrant state. This will only happen if the Bosnian Serbs, in particular, are offered assistance on condition of political co-operation: this could cause the most serious tension at the implementation conference. Most countries believe that the Bosnian Serbs should be included in international assistance programmes, but the US wants the Pale enclave excluded.

Elections scheduled between months six and nine of the I-for deployment must go ahead. Creating conditions for free and fair elections will be difficult. But even imperfect elections are a vital element in Bosnia's renewal: they will ensure the removal of some leaders from office, as the Dayton agreement prohibits anyone indicted by the war crimes tribunal from standing for office. The present Bosnian Serb leaders will thus be excluded. Assistance must also be used to ensure that Radovan Karadzic could not try to stand. As far as possible, assistance should be geared to eliminating gangster politics. Access to resources must be conditional on wholly legal behaviour — that is, giving them an interest in behaving well.

Phase 5: Social rehabilitation This will be difficult, but may result partly from other developments: as Bosnia's famous bridges are physically rebuilt, so the social bridges between its people might be re-established. The evolution of a new Bosnian society will also mean a sensitive, but radical, approach to assistance in training and education. Most of all, there must be a common understanding of the past.

The regeneration of Bosnian society must also mean the reintegration of millions of refugees. There will have to be provision for a return to their homes, where possible, or every means for them to begin new lives where it is not. Aside fron material questions, this may also mean giving them psychological help.

Phase 6: Reconciliation This will mean understanding and coming to terms with the events of the early 1990s. A healthy society, healthy individuals and a peaceful future in which the past is not shaded in ignorance or myth are vital. The War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague will make a difference as it hears evidence. The first hearing in October was important because victims giving testimony could tell their stories. Victims everywhere could ease some of their pain and anger knowing that the world cared enough to listen and that their truth was told.

THE implementation conference must also, therefore, help Bosnia's dispossessed to feel that the settlement has sufficient justice. If it does not, grudges will be harboured and potential conflicts stored in the new Bosnia.

The EU's record in Central and Eastern Europe and in its administration of Mostar in Bosnia leaves much scope for scepticism. One solution would be to form a well-qualified task force that would give direction to the implementation programme with absolute political backing from governments. The UK government, as conference host, will want to claim credit for a worthwhile outcome.

War weariness probably rules out a return to war for some years, but now is the time to win the peace. It is already late. Plans for rebuilding Germany were met with scepticism in 1943. They are only just beginning for Bosnia.

The EU, with others concerned, must rapidly develop something like the Marshall Plan — a comprehensive plan for reconstruction and rehabilitation. This can secure the future of a united Bosnian state which, if not a Germany, might at least be an Italy.

James Gow is lecturer in war studies at King's College, London, and was the first witness to give evidence to the war-crimes tribunal on former Yugoslavia. His books include Legitimacy and the Military: The Yugoslav Crisis (Pinter)

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James Reston

The pope of Washington

JAMES "Scotty" Reston, who was born in poverty on the Clyde and who went on to become a friend of presidents, a political sage and a legend in American journalism, died yesterday at the age of 86.

In a remarkable 50-year tenure at the New York Times that spanned the Nazi invasion of Poland and the Iran-contra affair, he broke some of the greatest stories of his time -- from the founding of the United Nations to espionage allegations against the father of the atomic bomb. He also shaped his newspaper into the national debating chamber it is today, bagged two Pulitzer prizes a Presidential Medal of Freedom, and inspired a generation of reporters in his adopted land.

He came to epitomise the journalistic old school, two-finger typing, constant smoking and a contacts book that bulged with the luminaries of the era. He was a confidant to John F Kennedy, and a conduit to Nikita Khrushchev. He interviewed Joseph Stalin — *albeit by letter — and counselled* Lyndon Johnson. At his peak, one colleague conservatively estimated, Scotty Reston had the influence of three US senators.

James Reston was born in Clydebank into a firm, Calvinist household. His machinist father took the family to America when James was a toddler, only to return when his mother became ill. Young James grew up in abject poverty, feeling the chill of the Scottish depression that accompanied the first world war. He and his sister used to sleep, lengthwise, at the foot of their parents' bed.

The Restons gave the US a second chance, moving to Dayton, Ohio when James was 11. He was a mediocre student, eventually majoring in journalism at the University of Illinois, where he scored A grades — in sportswriting. But he had learned to play golf and was good enough to make Reston Sr urge his son to become a pro, over the objections of Mrs Reston, who encouraged the lad to become a preacher. Later he would say his mother had had her way.

On the golf course at the Dayton Country Club, Reston caddied for James Cox, owner of the Cox newspaper chain, who returned the favour by fixing him up with his first job on the Springfield Daily News, editing the sports pages. By 1934 he had moved to New York, writing sports features for the Associated Press wire service, who three years later handed him the plum job of a posting to London, charged with covering sports in summer and the Foreign Office in winter.

It was not the first occasion Reston benefited from the commodity a journalist most covets: luck. He was in the right place at the right time. Poached by the New York Times, he started at the paper's London bureau on *September 1, 1939*, the moment Hitler marched into Poland.

From his vantage point in London, seven floors up and with a view of St Paul's Cathedral, Reston filed dispatches on the Blitz which played a real part in engendering American sympathy for the British war effort and in eroding America's isolationist mood. He once irritated his London hosts, when he skirted round the British censor and reported that a German U-boat had torpedoed the HMS Belfast. Ingeniously, he had filed his dispatch in code. He later regretted his action and "its effect upon the psychology of the country in time of war." Nevertheless, the grudge melted sufficiently for him to be awarded the CBE years later.

He was brought back to Washington in 1940, where he stayed, with one brief interruption, till his death. First as a reporter, then as bureau chief and columnist, he made the town his own. One admirer called him the bishop of Washington, before hastily correcting himself. "He's the Pope, for God's sake."

His greatest scoop came in 1944 at Dumbarton Oaks, where world leaders had gathered to lay the foundations for the UN. A former office boy at the New York Times had become a member of the Nationalist Chinese delegation, and he passed a full copy of the UN blueprint to Reston. Deploying a form of "Chinese water torture" against his rivals, Reston revealed the story in chunks — producing an exclusive every day for a week. Later he turned the experience into a rule for journalistic rookies: seek out the disgruntled party, they'll always be willing to talk.

Critics objected to Reston's cosiness with the high and mighty, citing his cave-in on two cracking stories, apparently under pressure from his friend in the White House. He played down an accurate report that Cuban exiles were planning an assault on the Bay of the Pigs — removing the key information that the invasion was to take place "imminently". A year later he learned exclusively about the stationing of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. He spiked the story after President Kennedy warned that publication would undermine the US. In 1969 he showed similar restraint, when he was holidaying on Martha's Vineyard on the day of the Chappaquiddick incident. He politely asked the young senator Edward Kennedy for a chat, but, when rebuffed, never pursued the story.

Apart from a year-long, ill-fated spell as executive editor in New York, Reston reigned as the chronicler of Washington, his column compulsory reading until he put his battered manual typewriter away for the last time in 1989, on his 80th birthday. He left his mark with his 1970 innovation, the New York Times op-ed page, and in a legion of American journalists who can think of no higher compliment than to be called Scotty.

Jonathan Freedland

Alistair Cooke writes: He was the most alert, the most probing, the most knowledgeable — the best — of all Washington correspondents ... His most impressive ability was to chart the continuous movement of American life and politics with historical acumen, Scottish shrewdness and uncommon common sense, with which the old maestro watched the procession of similar problems faced by dissimilar egos ... On the jacket flap of his biography there was a photograph that told much about the immigrant Scot: a bulky but compact figure, ready for the prairie or the Pentagon, affable, unfooled, and sly.

James Barrett Reston, journalist, born November 3, 1909; died December 6, 1995

Reston ... ready for prairie or Pentagon KARSH OF OTTAWA

Cameo queen ... Harrison liked best her Dickens roles, such as in the film of The Pickwick Papers (below) PHOTOS: KOBAL

Kathleen Harrison

A chirpy charwoman

THE arrival of the customary 100th birthday telegram from the Queen in 1992 put the much-loved English character actress Kathleen Harrison, who has just died aged 103, in a quandary. For years she had evaded impertinent questions about her date of birth, or subtracted six years. But longevity caught up with her.

It was only when her son, Michael Back, a retired travel agent, pointed out to her that if she did not own up she would not get the curtain call from the Queen that she confessed. But Mr Back always defended his mother's little idiosyncracy on the grounds that she was brought up at a time when ladies were allowed a little discretion.

True, her own stage persona leant towards rich realism. For decades, Kathleen Harrison played members of the below-stairs classes — chirpy and indomitable Cockney charladies who could always be relied upon for advice or a comforting cuppa in a family crisis, after macabre crime or during an air raid. But she was no below-stairs Cockney herself: once, at RADA, when playing Eliza Doolittle in Pygmalion, she was counselled by Shaw himself to go to the Old Kent Road and listen for a sound East End accent.

Born in Blackburn, Lancashire, where her father was assistant to the borough engineer, she was first taken to the music hall at the age of four. The family moved to London the following year and she trained at RADA during the early years of the first world war. She married and went to live abroad for 10 years because she wanted to forget everything she had been taught about the theatre, having found it difficult to get stage jobs. But the pull was too strong: when she returned she said 10 years had seemed a lifetime.

She had made her film debut as early as 1915, in Our Boys, and her stage debut at the Pier Theatre, Eastbourne, in 1926, as Mrs Judd in The Constant Flirt. Her first appearance in the West End was as Winnie, in The Cage, at the Savoy Theatre in 1927. She slaved away playing comic charwomen and maids because, she said, no one else wanted such parts. But she became much valued. As Mary in R C Sherriff's Badger's Green she made such an impression with her two-line maid's part that Sheriff rewrote and expanded the part.

Her first real success was as the comic cook in a chiller by Emlyn Williams, Night Must Fall, about a psychopath on the prowl. When she auditioned it was thought her comic attack would kill the play's dark mood. But her reading suggested, rightly, that the audience would grasp at her for light relief. The Miles Malleson production at the Duchess Theatre was widely acclaimed, and so was she. She played the same part in the film.

Her film career was conspicuous in the years after the second world war. She first played Ma Huggett, matriarch of the Cockneys, in the film Wedding Bells in 1948. It was later renamed Here Come the Huggetts, which launched a series, including Vote For Huggetts and Huggetts Abroad. Meet The Huggetts became a popular radio serial.

Her later TV work included helping to create Ted Willis's self-made businesswoman Mrs Thursday, who for a time pushed Coronation Street off the top of the TV audience ratings. Other notable films were Bank Holiday, Major Barbara, A Girl Must Live and Coward's In Which We Serve.

But it was for her appearances in Dickens that she herself most wished to be remembered. She played with her usual sensitivity and gusto in Oliver Twist, The Christmas Carol and The Pickwick Papers. After all, she could dredge her own memory for the atmosphere of 19th century household life. Later, on TV, she appeared in Martin Chuzzlewit and Our Mutual Friend.

Dennis Barker

Peter Cotes writes: Most of Kathleen's special line of comic maids, suburban housewives, landladies and the like were funnies. But occasionally she played sad and wan little creatures in such dramas as Night Must Fall, her first important role in a West End success. It had been clear from the first reading that this former player of tiny comic servant girls would be perfect; the author's realisation of one who had to be, and was, indignantly real and funny.

J P Mitchelhill, who owned the Duchess Theatre, had seen her at his theatre in Jane's Legacy a few months earlier. It was largely through his enthusiasm for the pert little woman that she was cast to play the same type in the thriller that made her name.

Few of her parts were starry, but most of them were made distinctive by her sharp and clever playing in cameo roles. Kathleen spent over half a century being cowed on stage; off it, she was a kind but firm character who knew her own mind.

Wendy Trewin adds: In Emlyn Williams's The Corn Is Green (Duchess, 1938) Kathleen Harrison had one of her best parts as Mrs Watty, the cook who came to the Welsh village with Miss Moffat (Sybil Thorndike). Unfortunately, she brought her daughter, Bessie, who seduced the pit boy and almost prevented him from going to Oxford. Mrs Watty, who spends her afternoons off with the Salvation Army, confesses that she never liked her daughter — yet, as Harrison played Watty, she remained a sympathetic character. After 26 years she was back in the part at the Hampstead Theatre Club; she still looked the same.

She enjoyed several long runs during the heyday of the West End. She played Maudie, the wife of Dusty Miller, Sergeant Air Gunner, in Rattigan's Flare Path (Apollo, 1942). The Millers were the only working-class characters in the play; Rattigan could not do such people; but the acting of Harrison and Leslie Dwyer was so true that none of the critics suggested they were unreal.

In Rattigan's The Winslow Boy (Lyric, 1946) she played Violet, the parlour maid, a relatively small part. But she had one brilliant speech in which she described her day in court. She made it memorable. At the Haymarket in 1951, in Waters Of The Moon, by N C Hunter, she was the timid Mrs Ashworth, victim of the Blitz, one of the residents at the small Devon hotel invaded by a family from "just off Grosvenor Square". Once again, she was acting with Sybil Thorndike.

Kathleen Harrison, actress, born February 23, 1892; died December 6, 1995

David Schneider

Tales in bones or stones

DAVID Schneider, who has died aged 76, was one of the postwar American anthropologists who now make up the senior generation. He maintained his passionate involvement in the subject, and iconoclastic stance, to the end.

Schneider is best known for American Kinship: A Cultural Account (1968), in which he contributed significantly to the formation of symbolic anthropology, but did not — like many of his peers — go on to form a "school". He seemed to pride himself on knowing how academic self-promotion games were played while disdaining, sometimes with venom, the club of players of which he was a member.

He cultivated contradictions: he was a Jewish red diaper baby, but intellectually close to Talcott Parsons and most of his Ivy League contacts; he was enthusiastic about his fieldwork, but didn't use much of his field data; he was committed to a kind of interpretive anthropology, but harshly criticised those who elevated interpretive approaches over social theory — especially approaches that made a fetish of ethnography.

Before his arrival in Chicago, where he spent 25 years, he taught at the London School of Economics, Harvard and Berkeley. At Chicago he was one of the young recruits who created a curriculum which distinguished Chicago from other American departments, and established its reputation particularly in relation to the Boasian four-field approach, "stones and bones and stuff", as he put it. His impact on generations of students is inestimable.

In a volume of memoirs published this month (Schneider On Schneider: The Conversion Of The Jews And Other Anthropological Stories, Duke University Press), he conveniently provided his own obituary, in a series of relaxed and detailed interviews conducted by Richard Handler between 1991 and 1994.

Schneider recounted with invigorating candour his development as an anthropologist and his sharp views on the field, his colleagues, friends and enemies. It is a unique document, not only because of his frankness and confidence — on arriving in Chicago he gathered that he was perceived as "very difficult, aggressive, nasty, unpleasant, and so forth. Which of course was mostly true ..." — but because of the insight it casts on academic politics and the bathetic state of university and intellectual life.

As an informal history of postwar anthropology, it is informative, witty, indiscreet, unguarded and intelligent, like its author.

Stephen Nugent

David Schneider, anthropologist, born November 11, 1918; died November 2, 1995

Death Notices

BRENTNALL. Mary Patricia, on 5th December 1995, peacefully in hospital. Pat aged 81 years. The dear sister of Peter, a devoted aunt and great aunt. The funeral service will take place at Manchester Crematorium on Tuesday 12th December 1995 at 1.30pm. Family flowers only please, donations if so desired to The National Trust. All donations and inquiries to Bridgford & Sons, 58 Chorley Road, Swinton Tel. 0161 793 1228.

SOUTH. Mary, on 5th December. Funeral Honor Oak Crematorium SE4. Monday 11th December 1pm. No flowers please. Donations to Stroke Association. 123 Whitecross Street EC1Y 8JJ.

Engagements

Mr H.I.Bevan and Miss A.M.A.Vaughan. The engagement is announced between Howard, younger son of Mr and Mrs M.A. Bevan, of Tenby, Wales, and Adela, second daughter of Colonel and Mrs George Vaughan, of Barrowby, Lincolnshire

☎To place your announcement telephone 0171 611 9080

Birthdays

Kim Basinger, film actress, 42; **David Carradine**, actor, singer, 59; **Julian Critchley**, Conservative MP, writer, 65; **Susan Danby**, principal, College of the Royal Academy of Dancing, 51; **Prof Sir Roger Elliott**, FRS, physicist, 67; **Les Ferdinand**, footballer, 29; **Richard Fleischer**, film director, 79; **Jo Foley**, magazine editor, 50; **Lucian Freud**, OM, painter, 73; **James Galway**, flautist, 56; **Sir de Villiers Graaff**, former leader, South African United Party, 82; **Pauline Green**, leader, Labour MEPs, 47; **Ian Greig**, cricketer, 40; **Sir David Hay**, cardiologist, and his twin brother **Sir Hamish Hay**, former mayor of Christchurch, New Zealand, 68; **Geoff Hurst**, footballer, 54; **Sir Peter Levene**, the Prime Minister's efficiency adviser, chairman and chief executive, Canary Wharf, 54; **Jenny Linden**, actress, 55; **Bryan McClair**, footballer, 32; **Terry McDermott**, footballer, 44; **Sinead O'Connor**, singer, songwriter, 29; **Maximilian Schell**, actor, 65; **Raymond Seitz**, former US ambassador to Britain, 55; **Jimmy Smith**, jazz organist, 70; **Michael Unger**, editor, Manchester Evening News, 52; **David Verey**, banker, chairman, Lazard Bros & Co, 45.

Jackdaw

Dancing fool

"WALK WITH ME," John Travolta said. Walk with him? Yeah sure. Yeah right. He didn't mean walk with him; he meant walk like him, and we all know about his walk, that it's his instrument, and that he owns it.

"C'mon," he said. "Feel the music. Follow me. Walk." We were standing on a stage, in a theatre of empty seats. The theatre belonged to the Church of Scientology and in the back of the room, one of the church's besuited minions had disappeared behind a tasselled curtain to pipe Stevie Wonder's Superstition through hidden speakers. Travolta stood next to me, tapping his toes, clapping his hands. Then the movement of his toes passed into his hips, and the movement of his hands passed into his shoulders and arms and his body became a medium of graceful connections, and he started walking. He didn't go anywhere: he didn't have to. He stayed in one place, swinging his arms, stepping on the beat and yet for some reason, I felt obliged to catch up, as though I were his kid brother, tagging along, out of sight.

So I tried walking like John Travolta. I tried swinging my arms. I tried unfastening my hips and freeing my ass. Then I looked at myself and came to the unsettling realisation that my physical language was hopelessly and preposterously impoverished. I had never in my life used my walk for anything but the drudgery of transport, and there I was, trying to appropriate the sly, ball-swinging sauntet of Tony Manero. Well ... either my balls didn't swing, or they did and they didn't bother telling the rest of me. Because although I had been spared the cruelty of a mirror, I didn't need one to tell me that there, on stage, in front of John Travolta, I was marching, I was grinning, and I looked like a freaking drum major. "Cool," Travolta said, wishfully. "You're cool. You're the only person on the floor, and you're dancing for yourself. That's how you have to think. Dancing is acting. It's attitude."

Then he was gone. When the horns goosed the chorus of Superstition, he sprang from my side and began strutting the stage, his whole body chasing after his dick. That's how he moves — from the very centre of himself. Most people are scattered by their own movement, dispersed; Travolta is distilled and amplified. He seems, by the agency of motion, to grow larger, and as he picked up speed on his circuit of the stage, he was positively looming. Did I follow him? Well, what else could I have done? He was John Travolta. He was a movie star. I had asked him to give me a dancing lesson ... The least I could do was go along — although this was just the beginning, and what he ultimately gave me was a lesson in why he is a star and why I'm not.

Tom Junod trips the light fantastic with renaissance man John Travolta for GQ.

Waste material

Briar and fennel and chincapin,
And rue and ragweed everywhere.
The field seemed sick as a soul with sin,
Or dead of an old despair,
Born of an ancient care.

The cricket's cry and the locust's whirr,
And the note of a bird's distress,
With the rasping sound of the grasshopper,
Clung to the loneliness
Like burrs to a trailing dress.

So sad the field, so waste the ground,
So curst with an old despair,
A woodchuck's burrow, a blind mole's mount
And chipmunk's stony lair,
Seemed more than it could bear.

So lonely, too, so more than sad,
So droning loud with bees —
I wondered what more could Nature add
To the sum of its miseries ...
And *then* — I saw the trees

Skeletons gaunt that gnarled the place,
Twisted and torn they rose —
The tortured trees of a perished race
Of monsters no mortal knows,
They startled the mind's repose.

From Waste Land by Madison Cawein, published in 1913, eight years before T'S Eliot's poem The Waste Land. Cawein was "too well known to need any introduction" at the time. Thirteen similarities have been noted between the two: Eliot's "a handful of dust", for example, echoes Cawein's "a breath of dust". Eliot was keen on playing games, describing his notes to The Waste Land as "bogus scholarship" and defining "poetic originality" as "assembling the most disparate and unlikely material". Unearthed for the Times Literary Supplement by Robert Ian Scott.

Baby boom!

AS THE cuckoo chirps [midnight] on December 31, 1995, a new and strange pall will descend somewhere in these United States. The original baby boomer will have turned 50. Not 500 years, but a mere five decades of brotherly love, democracy, and peace. And what will there be to show for it? The best answer is: Don't Ask ... I recently went to speak at a university. My host was an exact contemporary of mine and a good fellow. "I think the students hate me," he said. "They look at me and think, Here is one of those guys who had it all their own way in 1968: sex, dope, revolution — the lot. And what has he left us? Political correctness and safe sex" ... The post-1945 generation has been, at least until recently, free of the fear of untreatable disease and mass unemployment. It more or less grew up knowing that sex and procreation could be easily separated ... Car ownership and cheap gas were rights, not privileges. Anybody who could read without moving his lips (and some who could not) could and did go to college ... So where did it all go? A character in David Lodge's new novel, Therapy, adds up all his reasons to be satisfied and fulfilled and superior: good job, fine income, proper marriage, relevant number of kids, and all the rest of it. Then he writes down his discontents. These begin with "Feel unhappy most of the time" and, after a long and thoughful pause, "Pain in knee" ... Ralph Whitehead, a demographer at the University of Massachusetts, has made a special study of the species and says, "If there's one thing that has come through in all the interviews and focus groups I've done with boomers, it's that these people have big egos but weak identities ... The typical baby-boomer is like a balloon stretched very tight. The air is the big ego, and the thin, tigtly stretched rubber is the identity. One pinprick and you're gone."

Uma ... Vanity Fair

Christopher Hitchens ponders the fate of the poor old baby-boomers for Vanity Fair. Beginning next month, one baby-boomer will turn 50 every seven and a half seconds. Mr Hitchens was born in 1949.

Jackdaw wants your jewels. E-mail jackdaw@guardian-.co.uk.; fax 0171-713 4366; Jackdaw, The Guardian, 119 Farringdon Road, London EC1R 3ER.

Dan Glaister

هكذا من الاصل

Bank in BCCI trouble, page 12

GEC candidates wait for spring, page 12

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Finance Guardian

Grandchildren's overtures spurned as family rallies behind matriarch in vote on Moores empire

Littlewoods vetoes bids

Patrick Donovan

THE wealthy Moores family closed ranks yesterday to protect the independence of Britain's biggest private company by voting to reject competing takeover offers that would have valued their personal shareholdings at more than £1 billion.

Family shareholders rallied behind the matriarch, Lady Grantchester, to pledge nearly 80 per cent of their shares against takeover proposals which had been championed by 33-year-old Donatella Moores and her brother Alexis, grandchildren of the firm's founder.

The vote on the future of the mail order and pools firm was taken at an extraordinary general meeting held at its Liverpool headquarters after two rival takeover offers were launched.

It is understood that the mail order firm, Argos, is one of several other companies looking at the option of bidding for Littlewoods. Hamburg-based Otto, Europe's biggest mail order firm, has also shown interest.

The first known bid is being assembled by Barry Dale, a former chief executive who is supported by a group of city venture capitalists, under the name Bidco.

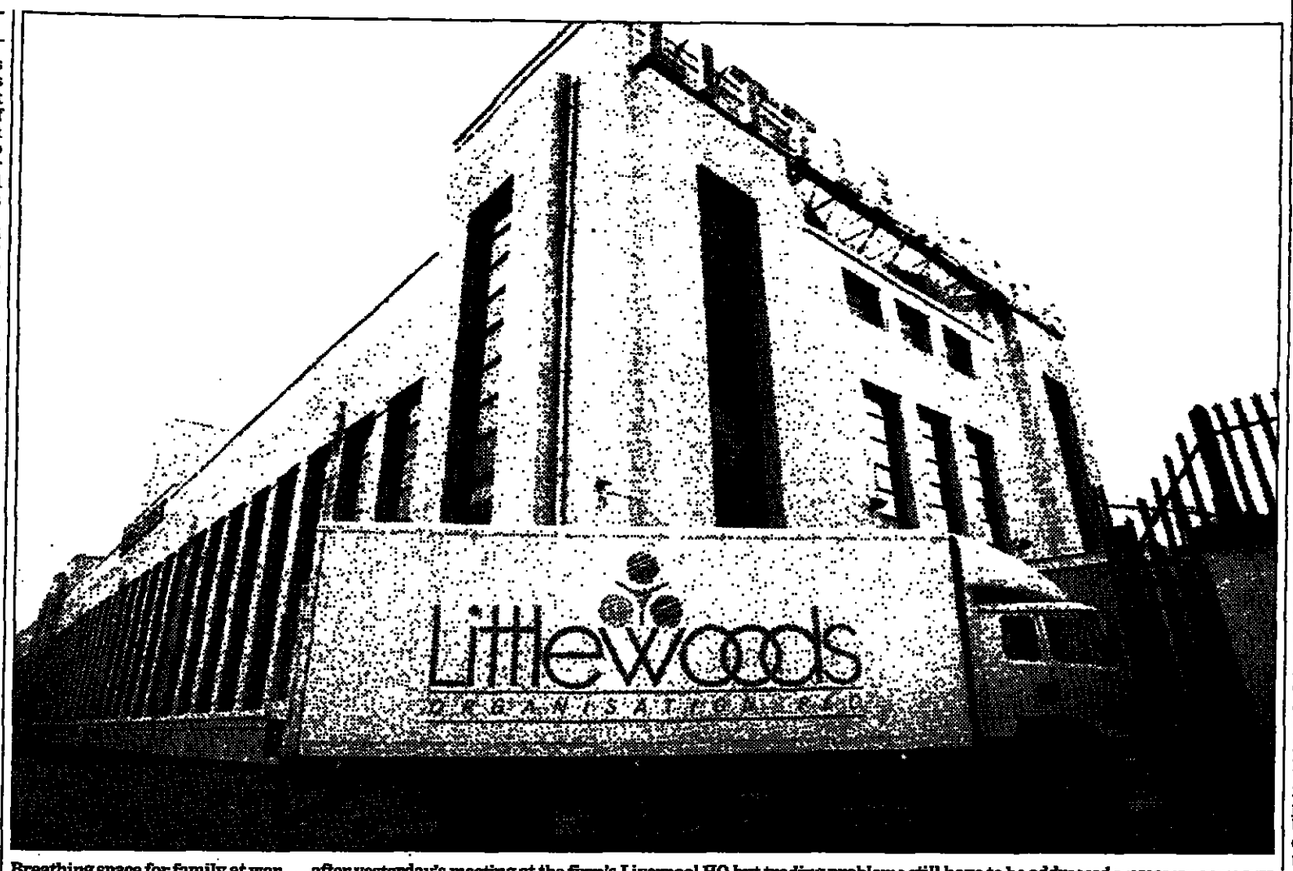
Mr Dale last night pledged to continue with his bid. "I am not altogether surprised by the decision but I remain interested," he told BBC Radio Five Live.

"The pressure is now on because of the lack of progress within the group's trading activities. If it cannot improve, pressure will get higher. Without fairly radical changes, Littlewoods won't be in satisfactory commercial shape in the future."

Uncertainty surrounding the future of Littlewoods — founded by Sir John Moores in 1923 — intensified after Sir David Alliance's mail order firm, N Brown, and the Iceland frozen food combine pitched in with a rival offer this week.

The consortium's reaction last night was that it would welcome any reconsideration of its proposals after Littlewoods' board had reviewed its options.

Although Ms Moores had been urging family members to consider bids, they voted "overwhelmingly" against any proposal for the company to be taken over. More than 80 per cent of the shares, held by 32 family members, voted against the first resolution which asked whether they would consider the bid from Mr Dale. Almost the same proportion then voted against a second resolution which asked them whether they would consider any takeover.



Breathing space for family at war . . . after yesterday's meeting at the firm's Liverpool HQ but trading problems still have to be addressed PHOTOGRAPH: DON McPHEE

Leonard van Geest, the chairman, was greeted with a chorus of cheers as he announced the verdict to a gathering of 90 senior managers just before they sat down to their annual Christmas dinner. Mr van Geest later insisted that the verdict of the meeting now gave Littlewoods breathing space to decide its future. He conceded that the structure of the company was under "active review".

Influence: Lady Grantchester

The company's financial advisers would now seek a legal "standstill" agreement to prevent either bidder from putting in another takeover offer for up to a year.

Mr van Geest last night urged other potential bidders to recognise the wishes of shareholders.

Mr van Geest insisted that yesterday's EGM had been "amicable" despite behind-the-scenes attempts by Ms Moores to force the vote on takeovers. It is understood that she had secured the support of her father, Peter Moores, son of the business's founder. But her overtures had made little impression on other family members, who are thought to be greatly influenced by Lady Grantchester, the daughter of Sir John.

Mr van Geest insisted that the EGM had concentrated on the vote and had not discussed other strategic issues. Everything was under consideration, including the possibility of a partial stock market share flotation. This has been described as the best way forward for the company by its financial advisers.

Liverpool's own Dynasty sweeps on to next episode

Martyn Halsall

BROOKSIDE it was not. As shareholders arrived at Littlewoods' 12-storey glass tower headquarters in Liverpool for yesterday's extraordinary general meeting, their long-running corporate soap opera had already been renamed. "Liverpool's own Dynasty," quipped a local university professor.

Donatella, grand-daughter of company founder John Moores, was the only visible star. Her sweep of dark hair and leopard-skin coat flared between a chauffeur-driven Jaguar and the plate-glass doors.

There was a fleeting flurry of companions and bags and a word of thanks to the driver. A glide past the Christmas tree, up the marble stairs and a left turn through the computerised security system into one of the retail division's meeting rooms.

Other leading players at Britain's largest family-owned company preferred more discreet entrances, particularly the one from the underground car park, and arrivals before first light.

A board meeting, of between 12 and 15 people, began at 9am. The extraordinary general meeting started about 11.30am with 16 of the 32 family shareholders and professional advisers. By then it was snowing.

In 17 lines of resolutions lay the future of the 72-year-old business empire and of 25,000 employees, whose endeavours produced a £2.73 billion turnover and a pre-tax profit of £116 million in 1994.

The sources of Littlewoods' wealth range from the world's largest football pools to stores in Russia and India, from 6.5 million catalogue customers to a stake in US-style warehouse clubs.

By 12.15 the egm was over and an hour later it was time for the rest of the world. The books remained closed. Bidco was rebuffed — and the others.

"Back to business," company chairman Leonard van Geest told the media. The meeting was "very amicable". Relief? Bill Huntley, chief executive, thought long and hard: "It's too strong a word, 'relief'. It's pleasing."

Upstairs the board meeting continued. Donatella was seen leaving in the back of a BMW. Dynasty moves on to the next episode.

Notebook

Still lording it after 47 years

Edited by Alex Brummer

THE succession of one Lord Wolfson, David, for another Leonard (his cousin) at Great Universal Stores is about as smooth as is likely to happen. There are no mumblings as there have been at Hanson, Forte and GEC about the sustainability of dynasties nor any open warfare of the kind papered over by the Moores descendants in Liverpool yesterday.

There are in the case of GUS, critical differences. First, the new chairman, Lord David Wolfson of Sunningdale, having worked at GUS in the 1970s has cemented his reputation as a retailer as the chairman of Next during a recovery phase which saw the company's shares climb from a low of 10p to 440p. Second, it is difficult to argue with the instincts of a dynasty which has steered the company through 47 years of uninterrupted profits growth and appears set for year 48 on the basis of above-expectation earnings in the first half of the current year.

With the new chairman's arrival, there will no doubt be much talk of de-merging, unlocking assets and spending the £1 billion cash mountain, among analysts. There has even been speculation that David Wolfson will seek to bring the GUS and Next franchises together. All of this is rather fanciful. GUS has gone some way to reorganising itself. In the 1980s, it disposed of much of its retailing, just retaining the quality Burberrys and Scotch House brands: one of the few upmarket retailers (look at what has happened to Aspreys and Lillywhites) to remain in UK hands. It also remains a master at running mail order businesses and plans to push the frontiers of the new Europe.

Some might argue that mail order, especially of the kind deployed by GUS, is a less alluring business in the age of out-of-town shopping. Not a bit of it. In an age of working mothers it provides ideal access. And if someone at GUS can combine its pages with the multimedia technology of television shopping and the Internet, GUS the old campaigner may have more decades of profits growth to come.

Eddie's job

HUMILITY is not a quality for which central bankers are renowned. But even by their standards, the stance of the Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, in front of the Treasury select committee, was tough.

Mr George declined to take an opportunity to admit his advice to the Chancellor in the spring to raise base rates had been proved wrong by the sharp subsequent economic slowdown. Far from it. Mr Clarke was mistaken to ignore the Bank, and the credibility of the Government's monetary policy has suffered as a result.

Indeed, the only thing which prevented a slump in the value of the pound in the wake of the Chancellor's carefree decision was — in the Governor's world-view — a revival in the fortunes of the dollar. The outcome was a "fortunate" one for the Chancellor, he told MPs.

In fact, as hard-pressed businessmen everywhere will testify, Mr Clarke was right to resist Bank pressure for dearer borrowing. The Governor may not be, coining a phrase of one Labour committee, an "inflation nutter" — but he may have been over-cautious, worrying more about his reputation in the salons of Basle than sustaining growth at home.

Undeterred by the criticism, Mr George fired off a warning shot against any loosening of policy now — dropping heavy hints that he will oppose a rate cut when he meets Mr Clarke next week. He thinks inflation could pick up as wage-negotiators grow in confidence and consumer confidence seeps back.

The latest CBI survey gives some support to the Bank's fears, suggesting retailers are enjoying a bumper pre-Christmas season. The most gloomy predictions of massive de-stocking in manufacturing have yet to be realised although the long decline in leading indicators is a concern. Moreover, the Treasury's adamantly held view that the economy can expand rapidly next year without cutting base rates does look over optimistic.

However, it is not the Governor's job to dig the Chancellor out of a hole. His mandate is to bring inflation down to 2.5 per cent or below. With the economy slowing, the balance of probabilities is shifting in that direction: but Mr George may prefer to wait before risking the Bank's credibility again.

. . . Alan's, too

IT IS not just in the UK that the interest rate debate is reaching an end of year peak. In the United States there has been a strong rally in government bonds, temporarily bringing the benchmark yield below 6 per cent, on confidence that inflation is well under control and that President Clinton can deliver a balanced budget early next century.

As expected, the President has now unveiled his balanced budget plans — including a $4 billion extra corporate tax increase (to $25 billion) and a $46 billion reduction in welfare payments — meeting some Republican demands and setting the scene for a possible compromise. Enough in fact to keep the dollar reasonably firm on the foreign exchanges.

But not enough to reassure Alan Greenspan at the Federal Reserve who, like our own Governor, is sitting on his hands until he is more sure inflation is dormant.

Governor and CBI split on rates

Larry Elliott and Richard Thomas

THE Governor of the Bank of England, Eddie George, and the Confederation of British Industry clashed over interest rates yesterday amid speculation that the Chancellor will order a cut in borrowing costs next week.

Despite the best trading conditions for shops and stores since the spring, the employers' organisation called for an immediate cut in base rates.

"If I were a politician I would do it without delay", said Alastair Eperon, chairman of the CBI's Distributive Trades Panel. "Unless there is a modest and sustainable cut in interest rates we are not going to see the revival in consumer spending that the Chancellor is looking for".

However, Mr George made it clear yesterday that he will oppose lower base rates at Wednesday's monthly monetary meeting with Kenneth Clarke.

Giving evidence to the backbench Treasury and Civil Service Committee, the Governor hinted heavily that he was set to advise against any easing of monetary policy. "The Bank's November inflation report showed that our central best guess was that we are still not on course to hit the inflation target".

Higher wage settlements, strong growth in the money supply and a weaker pound could all pose a threat to the goal of low inflation, Mr George warned. "I would have to say that the uncertainty is as great now as I can remember for some time," he said.

In a bullish performance, the Governor said Mr Clarke's decision to ignore Bank advice to raise rates in the spring had dented the Government's credibility on the financial markets and weakened the pound — although he admitted the immediate outcome had been favourable.

"There was a happy outcome in the short-term. But to take risks consistently on that side . . .carries a cost." Dealers were not yet convinced that the Government had the necessary political determination to carry through its 2.5 per cent inflation target.

At next week's meeting, Mr George may well cite the CBI's latest quarterly survey, in which 50 per cent of retailers said sales volumes were up on November 1994, while only 27 per cent said they were lower. The balance between the two — 23 per cent — compared with 16 per cent in October and was the strongest since the 25 per cent notched up in April.

Stores still reported that business was below average for the time of year, and are cautious about both increasing investment and taking on more staff.

Turin magistrates request Fiat executives be sent to trial

John Glover in Milan

TURIN magistrates have asked for Cesare Romiti, the chief executive and managing director of Fiat, to be sent for trial on charges of issuing false company information, tax fraud and bribing political parties.

Similar requests have been made for Francesco Paolo Mattioli, the group finance director, accused of issuing false company information and illegal political financing, and for another executive Clemente Siguorini, who is accused of tax fraud. A judge must now rule whether there is sufficient evidence to put the three on trial.

Vittorio Chiusano, the lawyer who is acting for both Mr Romiti and Mr Mattioli, said that the investigators are repeating charges already dismissed by three Rome courts, including the Court of Cassation, the highest of the country's appeal courts.

"The request is illegitimate. Romiti has already been acquitted three times on these charges. The law says he can't be tried again on the same counts," he said.

The offences are alleged to have taken place from the mid-1980s, when Italy's Socialist Party was at the height of its power, to 1992, when the "Mani Pulite" (Clean Hands) investigation began to lay bare the corrupt relations between Italian politicians and big business.

GUS ends record era but does not remain peerless

Roger Cowe

THE king is dead, long live the king. Lord Wolfson, chairman of the mail order group Great Universal Stores, is not dead but GUS announced yesterday that he is retiring. The company, which leads the mail order industry with Kays and Marshall Ward catalogues as well as owning Burberrys and Scotch House, also named his successor — Lord Wolfson.

Idiosyncratic though the company is, it has not gone mad. The first Lord Wolfson (Leonard) is of Marylebone and will be 69 when he retires next year. His 60-year-old successor and cousin, David, is Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, who also announced yesterday that his chairmanship of retailer Next will become non-executive.

The two men are the sons of GUS founder Isaac Wolfson and his brother Charles.

This is a momentous occasion because Lord Leonard has been a director of the company since 1952, before Everest was conquered, before the Queen was crowned, before ITV was invented. Not only does that make him the longest-serving director of any big public company, but during that period GUS also, uniquely, increased profits every year.

The group continued that tradition yesterday, reporting a 5 per cent rise in pre-tax profit to £237 million, which is 27 times the surplus declared when Lord Leonard joined the board.

His impending departure is also momentous because it threatens to disturb the tranquillity of a group which has monotonously churned out profits with as little fuss and publicity as possible.

Accountants win campaign for chartered status

Sarah Ryle

ONE of Britain's main accountancy bodies is claiming victory in its long-fought campaign against unqualified practitioners.

The Chartered Association of Certified Accountants (Acca) yesterday welcomed a decision by the Privy Council to allow its members to include the word "chartered" in their title.

At present, anybody can set up as an accountant and Acca has been pressing for an official register and, with two more of the six main institutes in the UK and Ireland, sought to claim use of the word "chartered".

The two other accountancy bodies, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (Cipfa) and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (Cima) have been told they, too, will get the go-ahead very soon. The Privy Council decision will affect about 270,000 accountants.

Until now, although all six bodies are chartered institutes, only three have been able to use the name in their members' titles. The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, in particular, has jealously guarded the title.

Acca said yesterday that the Privy Council had no objection to any accountancy body with a royal charter using the word "chartered" in its member designation.

Peter Langard, deputy president, said: "This fully vindicates Acca's view that it is in the public interest to allow all professionally qualified accountants to describe themselves as chartered."

● Thousands of unqualified and inexperienced tax advisers may wreak havoc when self-assessment is introduced next year, *writes Ian Wylie.*

The claim comes in a report published yesterday by the charity TaxAid and sponsored by the Inland Revenue Staff Federation. The report calls for regulation of the title "tax adviser".

Sue Green of Bristol University, who wrote the report, said that there was already evidence of an increase in negligent, incompetent and dishonest conduct among advisers.

Ashanti digs in as leading gold producer

Dan Atkinson

ASHANTI, the Ghanaian gold mine whose history stretches back to the pharoahs, moved yesterday to consolidate its position as one of the world's leading bullion producers with an £80 million agreed bid for Cluff Resources, the one-time oil explorer turned African miner.

"We are going out with sharpened teeth," Ashanti chief executive Sam Jonah warned other takeover targets.

The deal will give Ashanti control of Cluff's Zimbabwean and Tanzanian operations, as well as its assets in Ghana. Cluff chairman Algy Cluff is currently negotiating to stay on and work for the merged group.

Should the takeover — already backed by Hong Kong trading house and Orange telephone-company owner Hutchison Whampoa, holder of 26.6 per cent of Cluff — go through, Ashanti will easily be Africa's biggest gold miner outside South Africa.

But, depending on the number of shareholders taking up the 1-for-12 share alternative to the 105p-a-share cash offer, it could weaken Ashanti's links with both of its major shareholders, the trading group Lonrho, holder of 41 per cent, and the government of Ghana, with 28.8 per cent.

Until last year, the government stake was 55 per cent, of which about half was floated. Now, effectively privatised, Ashanti is "in a rather acquisitive mood", said Mr Jonah yesterday.

Roger Chaplin, gold analyst with T. Hoare & Co., thought the deal looked good for Ashanti. There would, he said, be some head office and account department overheads to be saved in Ghana, where Cluff has its 50,000 ozs-a-year Ayanfuri gold mine.

Elsewhere, Cluff has 79.9 per cent of the 90,000 ozs a year Freda Rebecca mines in Zimbabwe and holds rights in the Geita goldfield in Tanzania amounting to proven near-surface reserves of 500,000 ozs.

The Geita field was a major mining operation between 1938 and 1966, at which point political factors forced its closure.

TOURIST RATES — BANK SELLS

Australia 2.02	France 7.40	Italy 2,410	Singapore 2.13
Austria 15.06	Germany 2.1500	Malta 0.5350	South Africa 5.48
Belgium 44.25	Greece 360.00	Netherlands 2.4250	Spain 183.00
Canada 2.05	Hong Kong 11.72	New Zealand 2.3250	Sweden 10.00
Cyprus 0.69	India 53.64	Norway 9.54	Switzerland 1.7350
Denmark 8.38	Ireland 0.9400	Portugal 227.00	Turkey 81,835
Finland 6.56	Israel 4.76	Saudi Arabia 5.75	USA 1.5075

Supplied by NatWest Bank (excluding Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

£550m claim alleges Bank of England's regulatory failure was deliberate breach of law. CHARLES RAW reports

Court holds key to BCCI secrets

ON AN autumn day in 1983, Stuart Lynas, of the Bank of England's banking supervision department, wrote a memorandum concerning the Bank of Credit and Commerce International, which was to collapse nearly eight years later amid recriminations over the failure of regulatory authorities around the world to protect depositors.

Mr Lynas bluntly stated that the Bank's supervisory approach was deficient.

His paper of October 19, 1983 has been quoted in a case, now drawing to a close in the Commercial Court, which could have more significant consequences for the Bank's role as a supervisor than the collapse of Barings.

The case is brought by some 6,000 depositors of BCCI who have been marshalled by the liquidators of the bank. It is based on the little-used ground that the Bank of England was guilty of "misfeasance in public office". Essentially the claim is that the Bank deliberately broke the law. The amount at issue is some £550 million.

The hearing, which has lasted 12 days before Mr Justice Clarke, is confined to points of law — essentially whether the Bank can be sued for misfeasance. The plaintiffs also claim that the Bank was in breach of European Union law. The Bank denies legal liability on both fronts.

'Under the Banking Act the primary responsibility for BCCI appears to rest with us. Our present supervisory approach is . . . deficient in the following respects:
1. We have an inadequate understanding of ultimate ownership and control;
2. We have neglected to satisfy ourselves with regard to the capital adequacy of BCCI SA;
3. We have restricted our supervision to the UK region only.
Short of revoking BCCI's licence, which would be difficult given that we have licensed them up to now, the alternative solution seems to be to call for incorporation in the UK.'

Stuart Lynas, Bank of England, October 1983

For the purpose of this hearing, the accuracy of the allegations made by the plaintiffs has been assumed — although the Bank will defend the action vigorously should it go to a full trial. No provision has been made in the Bank's accounts for any potential liability.

Sir Patrick Neill QC, for the plaintiffs, did outline some of the evidence and charges — despite objections by Nicholas Stadlen QC, for the Bank, to the inclusion, in the written outline argument presented to the judge, of a "lengthy exposition and commentary on the alleged merits of their factual claims".

The plaintiffs rely to a large extent on the Bingham inquiry into the supervision of BCCI, set up in July 1991 after the authorities closed the bank. The Bingham report, published in October 1992, criticised aspects of the Bank's conduct, but its language was more muted than the plaintiffs' statement of claim.

For example, one of the principal allegations is that the Bank "knowingly, deliberately contrary to the statutory scheme and hence in bad faith ... granted BCCI SA a full licence when, as the Bank knew," the criteria of the 1979 Banking Act were not fulfilled. It had failed to revoke the licence or take remedial steps out of "improper motives".

These alleged motives, which are not admitted, were summarised by the Bank's counsel as:

☐ Bureacratic lethargy leading to undue reliance on the IML [the Luxembourg Monetary Institute];

☐ Rigid adherence to a general policy predisposed against closing down apparently thriving businesses;

☐ Avoiding the diplomatic and political consequences of refusing to license or refusing to revoke the authorisation of BCCI SA.

While most, if not all, of the key documents relied upon by the plaintiffs were available to Bingham, its published report did not include their full contents. Appendices to Bingham, including a more detailed history of the role of the Bank of England, were not published because they were "subject to statutory restrictions on disclosure, some of it sensitive for other reasons and some of it subject to a high security classification".

The Lynas note was only briefly alluded to in Bingham and its author, who still works at the Bank of England, was not named.

BCCI was calling itself a bank when, according to section 36 of the Banking Act, it should not have been. Mr Lynas was equally blunt about this: "The problem with regard to section 36 contraventions is more difficult, particularly with regard to branches of SA, to which there seems no practicable alternative to turning a blind eye."

'Present arrangements are wholly unsatisfactory. It is not therefore considered an option to sit back and do nothing'

Brian Gent, Bank of England, July 1983

Mr Lynas at that time worked under Brian Gent (now deceased), a deputy head of banking supervision. Mr Gent wrote a number of memorandums about BCCI, which were referred to in the Bingham report, but not quoted in full, and are relied on by the plaintiffs.

As early as June 1982 he wrote that it was "something of a fiction" that BCCI's head office was in Luxembourg, when the Bank knew its treasury operation was conducted from London.

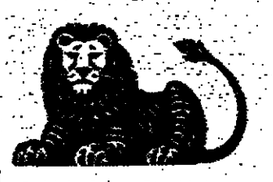
And in July 1983: "Present arrangements are wholly unsatisfactory. It is not therefore considered an option to sit back and do nothing. This leaves two basic choices: (a) to try to have BCCI closed down either worldwide or just the UK region; (b) to arrange for its supervision on a satisfactory basis."

After one more day's hearing later this month, Mr Justice Clarke will retire to write his judgment. Either side could then take the issue to appeal.

Eventually, the case could lead to the full facts of the Bank's role in the supervision of BCCI coming before the courts — and thus the public.

Charles Raw is author of The Moneychangers, an investigation into the collapse of Banco Ambrosiano

ING chief says Barings could reopen Far East trading next year



Ian King and Richard Thomas

ING, the Dutch insurance and banking conglomerate, said yesterday that income from Barings, the crashed merchant bank it bought for £1 earlier this year, had been "a bit less than expected".

Chairman Aad Jacobs was commenting on reports that Barings was set to break even this year but insisted that Barings had still been a "fantastic deal".

He said the bank could reopen Barings derivatives trading operations in Singapore and Japan some time next year after being shut since Barings collapsed in February in the wake of a series of reckless derivatives deals by trader Nick Leeson.

Mr Jacobs said ING had expected Barings to break even in 1995 in cash flow terms, covering the cost of the £660 million worth of debt the bank took on when it bought Barings, but said this was now likely to be achieved next year.

ING, which last month unveiled a 16 per cent jump in nine month pre-tax profits to £1.1 billion, is still meeting monthly salaries and costs associated with the Japan and Singapore derivatives operations, estimated to be £5 million.

Meanwhile, the influential Treasury select committee yesterday warned Bank of England governor, Eddie George, that it was investigating differences between the Board of Banking Supervision's report on the Barings collapse and that of the Singapore authorities.

The BBS report accused senior Barings management of failing to establish adequate controls, while the Singapore authorities concluded there had been a cover-up. Committee chairman, Sir Tom Arnold, said: "This is a far cry from blaming the debacle on the activities of one rogue trader."

Sharp-looking Compass to sell health division

COMPASS, the UK's biggest contract caterer, yesterday said it anticipated finding a buyer for its healthcare division by the end of the year, *writes Ian King*. Compass values the business at £135 million and is expected by analysts to sell it for £175 million-£200 million.

But chief executive Francis Mackay (pictured left with finance director Roger Matthews) declined to say whether Compass was preparing to sell the division — which comprises 15 private hospitals and two nursing homes — to its management. He added, however, that a sale would "quite probably" be confirmed by Christmas.

Mr Mackay's comments came as he announced a 31 per cent jump in full-year pre-tax profits to £73.2 million.

Describing the results as "excellent", Mr Mackay said Compass was now focusing on its catering activities, and health care no longer provided a strategic fit with the rest of the group. The shares closed up 4½p at 450½p.

PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID MANSELL

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INSTRUMENTS FOR PROFESSIONALS

GEC succession issue on hold in cold climate

Outlook

Roger Cowe

LORD Weinstock still reigns at GEC, although the succession issue will continue to rumble until the promised solution emerges in the spring. The electrical group was saying nothing about the process or the candidates to succeed the long-serving managing director yesterday as it published results for the half year to the end of September which showed most of its markets remain tough.

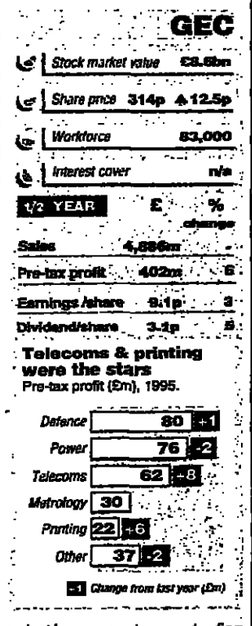
Profits increased to £402 million, thanks partly to this year's acquisition of the VSEL shipyard but also to a robust performance from telecoms and the videojet printing business. But the biggest number yesterday was for outstanding orders, which rose to a record £13.7 billion, up by almost £2 billion from the level at this time last year, and not only because of VSEL's inclusion.

The figure was further boosted yesterday by a £100 million military satellite British government order. This will be the third Skynet satellite and will be made by Matra Marconi, the joint venture with the French company Matra-Hachette.

Finance director David Newlands — who has been tipped as one of the internal candidates to take over from Lord Weinstock — said the telecoms business had done particularly well in export markets. "Trading around the world has not been too easy", he commented. "But we have done very well with transmission products. Exports have been good generally, but especially in the Far East."

Telecoms, the GPT joint venture with Siemens, lifted profit from £54 million to £62 million as a result of the surge in exports, which were 51 per cent higher than in the first half of last year.

A bigger proportional increase came from the printing division, despite continued difficulties at the AB Dick traditional litho printing operation, which made a loss. GEC had much greater success with Videojet, which makes printing equipment for bottles, wire and similar uneven surfaces. This business originated from AB Dick. Sales were up by almost a fifth and profit by 31 per cent. Back at AB Dick, new management will try to solve the problem of poor demand for the old technology.



Marconi's defence and other electronic systems business remains the biggest profit contributor, and indeed the only one which is wholly owned by GEC following the rash of joint ventures which transformed the group at the turn of the decade.

Sales here edged ahead to £1.3 billion, while profits did likewise to reach £80 million. GEC said profits were held back by heavy development costs.

The power systems joint venture with Alsthom actually reported a lower profit than last time despite sales being higher. Intense competition has kept prices down, thus compressing profit margins.

The order book was also slightly lower, at £6.2 billion, but Mr Newlands pointed out that train orders have been particularly strong.

As so often at GEC, the largest contribution to profits came from the group's cash rather than from its manufacturing activities. The cash pile fell slightly during the six months because of the net £280 million paid out for VSEL and other acquisitions, and capital expenditure of £147 million. But it yielded £83 million income, an increase of 19 per cent on last year.

The biggest challenge facing chairman Lord Prior is Lord Weinstock's promise two years ago that the succession would be sorted out next year, when he will be 72. GEC is seen ploughing on steadily towards the £1 billion profit mark in a couple of years' time, but while there have been many criticisms of Lord Weinstock's 32-year reign, there are just as many worries about how a successor will step into his shoes, even though it now seems clear that it will not be his son Simon.

Economic sluggishness hits Japan's surpluses

Kevin Rafferty in Tokyo

JAPAN'S ministry of finance yesterday announced the steepest monthly fall for five years in the country's trade and current account surpluses, boosting hopes that international frictions may be easing. But sceptical economists attributed the declines to sluggish economies in both Japan and the US.

The figures showed a 52 per cent fall in the current account surplus in October to $4.31 billion (£2.8 billion) and in the trade account by 32.7 per cent to $7.55 billion. The reasons for the declines were a big rise in imports as companies try to get cheaper supplies, and increasing overseas travel by Japanese citizens.

A finance ministry official expressed confidence that "the shrinking trend in the current account surplus will continue".

Tod Wood of Baring Securities said: "The diminishing pace of economic expansion in the US and Asia are working, together with Japan's rising propensity to import, to significantly reduce Japan's surplus."

On the credit side of Japan's relations with the US, the higher yen has helped boost foreign car sales, which are likely to reach a record 10 per cent of the total this year.

But most benefit from the 18 per cent rise in imports has gone to Japan's neighbouring Asian countries, rather than the US which has renewed its criticisms of the slow pace of economic deregulation.

A key Japanese advisory panel yesterday agreed that deregulation is important if Japan is to grow, and suggested that Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, the world's largest company, should be broken up.

News in brief

Unigate paves way for shopping spree

UNIGATE is expected to go shopping for food and distribution companies after raising £299 million from the sale of its 29 per cent stake in Nutricia, the Dutch babyfood maker. The British food manufacturer offloaded its stake through a global offering — announced last month — which met with favourable responses from international institutional investors and those in the Netherlands.

Unigate valued the Nutricia stake at £72.5 million in its books. It decided to sell because the yield on its stake was relatively modest and it wanted to redeploy the cash.

Analysts were quick to suggest possible targets for the group and rumours favoured Tibbett & Britten, the transport company, or BOC Group.

Julian Hardwick at BZW said the disposal would make little difference to the likelihood of acquisitions. Michael Bourke at Panmure Gordon said it was possible Unigate would seek to buy unquoted companies. "The last couple of purchases Unigate have made have been private companies in France. There are an awful lot of unquoted companies in the dairy sector." — *Tony May*

600 Blue Circle jobs go

BLUE Circle, the cement and industrial combine, is to make at least 600 European employees redundant after announcing a restructuring of its heating and bathroom businesses. Announcing the move, the company said it was to scale down operations at its boilermaking plant in Germany, and would be increasingly concentrating production in Britain.

Blue Circle, which said it would be taking an exceptional charge of £55 million as a result of the restructure, is also to invest around £40 million in its British bathrooms business over the next three years. The company said the investment, most of which will be on new technology, is expected to reduce costs while improving the quality of its ceramics products. The shares closed down 7p at 330p on the news. — *Ian King*

Builder loses £32.4m

YJ Lovell construction group fell into the red last year after making £32.4 million of provisions and writedowns as part of its strategy to concentrate on core activities, but its banks are continuing their support. Sir David Hardy, the chairman, said the company had approached its principal banks to review covenants and facilities. He added that a pre-tax profit of £4.2 million had turned into a loss of £32.4 million over the past year and the group was not paying dividends. "The provisions will allow management to continue an orderly asset disposal programme in the other businesses," he said. — *Tony May*

Boddington fits

GREENALLS, Britain's biggest independent pub operator, yesterday said it was "well on the way" towards integrating Boddington, the Manchester-based pubs group it acquired for £527 million during the summer. Andrew Thomas, chairman and chief executive, said the deal, completed last month, had already thrown up considerable synergies.

Mr Thomas's remarks came as Greenalls, which on Wednesday narrowly missed out on a place in the FTSE 100, unveiled an 18 per cent jump in pre-tax profits, to £100.5 million, on sales up 8.2 per cent at £760 million. Star performer was the hotels division. Despite the figures, its shares closed down 6p at 534p. — *Ian King*

Govett set to disappear

ONE of the City's best known names in fund management, John Govett, is poised to disappear in the new year after Allied Irish Bank yesterday agreed to pay £101 million for the group. AIB, which had been rumoured to be eyeing up Govett for some time, said it was "highly enthusiastic" about the deal, which makes it Ireland's largest fund manager.

Once the deal is completed, AIB proposes changing Govett's name to London Pacific Group Ltd, removing one of the City's oldest names. Govett, which has offices in Singapore, London and Jersey, has been managing funds since the 1920s, specialising in investment trusts and funds based in the Far East and other emerging markets. – *Ian King*

BICC sells building arm

BICC is selling most of its Clarke Homes building division to the Westbury house-building group for £61 million. The company said in August that it wished to sell Clarke to release capital for investment in its cable business. It values Clark at £34 million in its balance sheet, including some disposal expenses, while another £44 million of goodwill was written off when BICC bought Clarke in 1987.

Westbury is getting 2,228 plots of land with planning consent, and will pay for the deal through a one-for-three rights issue at 150p per share to raise £32.2 million. — *Tony May*

Fashion offer lapses

Ciro said its offer for fellow fashion retailer Country Casuals has lapsed after it gained only 35 per cent acceptance.

John Shannon, the chairman, said: "I am very disappointed that a number of larger institutional shareholders did not see fit to accept what I believe was an offer which fully valued the Country Casuals group as it stands. I only hope that the Country Casuals board can live up to the expectations it has created amongst shareholders." — *Extel*

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Rugby Union

Robert Armstrong on the off-the-field moves that may help give the Courage league an international flavour next season

Top clubs seek Springboks

SOUTH AFRICA's World Cup players Chester Williams and Joel Stransky and New Zealand's Andrew Mehrtens could be playing league and cup rugby for top English clubs next season.

All three have asked the sports travel and marketing magnate Mike Burton to negotiate moves to Courage League One clubs which would take effect after their respective provincial competitions end next October.

Several French internationals, including Laurent Cabannes, Olivier Roumat and Philippe Saint-André, are also exploring the prospects for a short-term switch to England next season. Last night the Harlequins director of rugby Dick Best returned from a recruiting mission in France designed to line up a couple of World Cup players.

England's league champions and cup holders, Leicester and Bath, are likely to be the beneficiaries of world-class talent once the Rugby Football Union clears the way for cross-border contracts at club and provincial level. Yesterday both clubs expressed interest in the opportunity to improve the quality of the Courage league by signing overseas players who could strengthen their squads.

"I am in working contact with provincial unions in South Africa, New Zealand and Australia who hold the contracts of players such as Mehrtens, Stransky and Williams who want to come here," revealed Burton. "There is no reason why they cannot play for a leading English club once they have fulfilled their commitments on the home front. The domestic seasons in the southern and northern hemispheres fit together conveniently and they allow players to be flexible in their movement."

Burton admitted he had held detailed discussions with Mike Teague of Gloucester, Fran Cotton of Sale, Malcolm Sinclair of Wasps and others about signing up top southern hemisphere players for next season. The South Africans Japie Mulder, Pieter Hendriks and Jaco Louw and the Welsh rugby league international David Young, of Salford, were also eager to join an English club, said Burton, who has worked on behalf of players in both codes.

"I think it's inevitable that union's most ambitious clubs and the world's best players would get together once the game took the decision to go professional," Burton added. "However, I believe the RFU should recognise exactly what is happening and take the necessary steps to keep control of the game, otherwise there's a real danger three or four millionaires could come in and take over all the main clubs."

The Leicester secretary Tudor Thomas said that he had received a telephone enquiry from Paris yesterday morning about the Tigers' plans for player recruitment next season.

"We would be interested in any good overseas player who could strengthen our team, though we would always give consideration to our own players," he said.

John Quin, the Bath secretary, welcomed the prospect of South African World Cup players bringing their skills to the English club scene. "We have to find ways to improve the Courage league generally, which has gone a bit flat to say the least. That's one of the reasons why we are looking towards Europe, as indeed Bath have done for several years. Certainly the presence of outstanding overseas players will increase public interest in Courage league matches."

Derek Brown, the Bristol chairman, said: "If Chester Williams approached us we would talk to him. We need to find ways to draw more spectators in. We have to build a successful and entertaining side to do that and obviously overseas players could be part of the whole thing."

Both Stransky and Williams play for Western Province, the side Robert Jones of Wales recently played for on a short-term contract. It is understood that Jones's successful stay there convinced his Springbok team-mates of the merits of making the transfer traffic two-way.

Chris Hewett on the young fly-half star who has suddenly been spotted in the west and who plays against the Samoans next week

England welcome advent of the boy King

EVER since the All Blacks unleashed Jonah Lomu, Andrew Mehrtens and Glen Osborne on an unsuspecting world in South Africa seven months ago, "fast-tracking" has become the most fashionable phrase in the rugby lexicon. If young Alex King is half as fast as the track he is currently occupying, the Western Samoans will not see him for dust at Gateshead next Tuesday.

There is something curiously un-English about the way the 20-year-old economics undergraduate from Bristol University has been propelled up the fly-half pecking order over the past four weeks.

This time last month, King was leading a cheerfully uncomplicated lifestyle, mixing the rigours of degree-level accountancy with a twice-weekly run-out for the college side, more often than not in front of one professor and a dog. Next week he will find himself on a far grander stage.

His sudden promotion to the England A side, who begin their season with a potentially bruising match against the tourists from the South Seas, has surprised almost everyone.

Remarkably, King has never played a Courage League One match. His club allegiance remains with Rosslyn Park, the Roehampton-based League Three side he joined after leaving school in Brighton. It was only when the South-West gave him his chance in a Divisional Championship devalued by the absence of the England Test squad that the wider rugby public became aware of his existence.

If anyone had an advance inkling of King's leap up the ladder it was Bob Reeves, his university coach. The man who nurtured the precocious talents of Jon Webb and Kyran Bracken during their student days has been working with his latest protege for the past 18 months. More to the point, he has been pushing the "fast-track" theory in the face of the England manager Jack Rowell ever since the World Cup ended in June.

"I firmly believe that a reservoir of very exciting talent exists outside of the Courage leagues," said Reeves. "There is no earthly reason why the best student players should be ignored at representative level just because they are not committed to clubs.

Promising student . . . the rise of Bristol University's Alex King during the past month has surprised even himself PHOTOGRAPH: CHRISTOPHER JONES

"In fact, the weekly grind of league rugby can be counter-productive for young players. All too often it breeds a conventional, conservative, stereotyped approach to the game. I've been arguing for some time that we should be prepared to look elsewhere.

"Yes, I've put those points to Jack, but it wasn't a case of pushing players from my own university. Having said that, I'm delighted for Alex. He has vision, an attacking instinct and an appetite for hard work. I'll be fascinated to see how he goes against the Samoans."

King is quick to acknowledge Reeves's influence. "He's been brilliant. I owe him a great deal already and I'm still only half-way through my time at Bristol.

"I'm excited at the prospect of playing for England A, which will be a big step up in terms of pace and pressure. And that excitement is mixed with surprise, because at the start of the season I was setting my sights only on making the Under-21 side."

Admirers talk of King's wicked acceleration over the first 10 metres — something he has in common with his hero, Jonathan Davies — and the physical dimension he brings to his defensive game.

He also has a left boot of considerable potential, although his place-kicking remains inconsistent. "That's something I'm working on," he admitted.

Not surprisingly, King has already been approached by a number of leading clubs. Both Bristol and Gloucester have registered a firm interest and Bath are keeping tabs on his progress.

"When I do decide to join a big club I'll probably look at the West Country sides first for purely logistical reasons: while I'm at university it makes sense to limit the amount of travelling I have to do. But even then it may not be a long-term thing. Once I get my degree I plan to work in London.

"Whatever happens over the next few months I intend to play as much university rugby as I can. I get a tremendous amount of enjoyment from playing alongside my friends, and while I'm working for my degree, which is all-important, I still consider my rugby to be a form of relaxation."

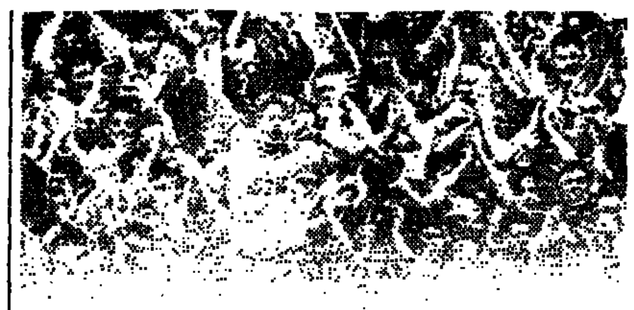
Pine Tree is cut down to size as Hart shows him the door

COLIN MEADS yesterday became the first casualty of New Zealand's new coaching regime when the manager was sacked by the All Blacks' new coach John Hart, *writes Ian Malin*.

The former All Blacks lock, known as Pine Tree, was a very vocal opponent of Hart. He has been replaced by Mike Banks, who played full-back for Manawatu in the late Seventies. New Zealand have also named Ross Cooper and Gordon Hunter as selectors alongside Hart.

Paul Challinor of Harlequins replaces Paul Grayson at fly-half for Midlands in the Divisional Championship decider against North at Nottingham tomorrow. Grayson takes the traditional break on the weekend before his England debut.

WESTERN SAMOANS (v South-West, Gloucester, tomorrow): **V Patu**; **B Lima**, **T Vaega**, **K Tuigamala**, **A Telea**; **D Kellett**, **J Filemu**; **M Mika**, **O Matauiau**, **P Fatialofa**, **L Falaniko**, **M Birtwistle**, **S Kaleta**, **P Lam** (capt), **S Vaifale**.
MIDLANDS: **J Quantrill** (Rugby Lions); **A Smallwood** (Nottingham), **B Whetstone** (Bedford), **A Kerr** (Moseley), **H Thorneycroft** (Northampton); **P Challinor** (Harlequins), **J Farr** (Winnington Park); **M Volland** (Northampton), **R Cockerill** (Leicester), **N Webber** (Moseley), **J Phillips** (Northampton), **D Grewcock** (Coventry), **I Skingsley** (Bedford), **B Pountney** (Northampton), **C Tarbuck** (Leicester, capt). **Replacements**: **S Glover** (Rugby), **A Hepher** (Northampton), **A Royer** (Nottingham), **C Johnson** (Northampton), **M Freer** (Nottingham), **G Seely** (Northampton).



Extra time

Edited by Jeremy Alexander

Man of the Match double standards

JOHN WAITE had nothing to do for five days in Johannesburg except follow the second Test. At the end of it he had one task: to name the Man of the Match. He named two.

It is not the first time an adjudicator has failed in his sole role. In 1992 (West Indies v South Africa) a diplomat shared the award between Ambrose (eight wickets) and Hudson (century). This year (Zimbabwe v Pakistan) the Flower brothers proved indivisible — or indistinguishable. At first Zimbabwe did not countenance such awards. Now they have batsmen, bowlers and fielders of the match.

The first time a Test adjudicator sat on the fence here was at Lord's in 1984. Evans could not separate Botham (eight for 103) and Greenidge (214 out of 344 for one to win).

The very idea of a Man of the Match contravenes the ethos of cricket, the team game *par excellence*. If it is obvious, why reward someone for stating it? If it is not — and therefore a matter of opinion — why introduce contention? In the decisive 1984 Texaco Trophy match Richards made 84 not out off 65 balls. Compton gave the award to Harper (one for 38 and a spectacular catch to nip Botham in the bud). Richards was livid.

The procedure, which smacks now of jobs for the old boys in cahoots with sponsors, came in with the Gillette Cup in 1963. The first winner was Lancashire's Peter Marner, against Leicestershire in the preliminary round.

The TCCB accepts the business. "There is no harm in recognition of the individual," says its PR manager Richard Little. "It is a bit of icing on the cake to endorse a team effort." Apparently the custom of pooling the prize justifies the divisive awarding of it.

In the 1984 B and H Cup final May chose the Lancashire captain Abrahams, who caught one and made a duck. That was a good year for derision. He may have thought he was choosing Rabbit of the Match.

Sixth column

THE WPBSA has stepped up its efforts to generate snooker interest on the Continent. It has taken the German Open this week to Frankfurt, the only major city in Germany without a snooker club. On Tuesday Parrott beat Clark before an audience of one. In 1988 the WPBSA staged an event in Deauville in February. There was only one guest then, too, baffled by the number of waiters.

Eurosport, spreading the gospel from a studio in Paris, would not have made it to Frankfurt if it had tried. The commentator began: "Welcome to Stuttgart." He later pointed out Hendry, "winner of the *British* Open in Preston". Germans prefer pool.

Snooker commentators are used to being cut off from the sounds of action — or the action they wish to describe. For a Barry Hearn promotion in Hong Kong, Rex Williams was located in the gents'.

FRANCISCO SANCHEZ soon realised he had caused an upset at the world short-course championships in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday, when winning the 50 metres freestyle. The organisers had no recording of the Venezuelan anthem. Swimmers and delegates bailed them out by singing it off the cuff.

NICK FALDO was trying to show a lighter side to his character at last week's Million Dollar Challenge at Sun City. "Don't believe what you read," he said. "That's the new me. Mr Personality. Me and Lee [Trevino]."

Last year, though, when he won, Sun City was the scene of one of Faldo's more prophetic remarks. At the prize-giving he said: "I asked my wife what she wanted for a present. She said she wanted a divorce but I told her I wasn't thinking quite so expensive as that."

MEANWHILE Melanie, the first Mrs Faldo, was wearing her public relations hat and launching the National Married Couples Matchplay Championship, to be played at Mannings Heath, Horsham, next July. This "will see 128 couples competing for a massive prize-fund which totals £3,000".

The entry fee is £70 per couple. Danny Pecorelli, the club's secretary, will select entries to achieve a wide national spread. With the Synod in session, he stressed that divorced couples and live-in partners were excluded and that competitors might be asked to produce marriage and handicap certificates — as if there were some difference. From a bunker in Westminster a Church of England spokesman said: "Anything which contributes to the togetherness of married couples is to be welcomed."

THE Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games is discovering how hard it is to please everyone. It designed a 15,000-mile torch route passing within a two-hour drive of 200 million Americans and specifically through Yale, Oklahoma, which it thought was the birthplace of Jim Thorpe, who won the Olympic decathlon in 1912. But Thorpe was born 40 miles away in Prague, whose residents want the route altered. The ACOG is at a crossroads.

It has also disappointed 600 composers, who have poured their hearts and crescendos into cassettes of would-be Olympic anthems. But animal rights groups are happy. The ACOG has bowed to pressure and gone for a "symbolic and theatrical" release of doves at the opening ceremony. At Seoul in 1988, birds were incinerated by the Olympic flame. Atlantans do not care for roast dove.

THE Beijing Ducks, one of 12 teams in China's new basketball league starting on Sunday, have changed their logo between hatching and going on court. The first image was too friendly, so the players demanded a ferocious duck. The new one may not scare the league's Panthers and Tigers but its eyebrows are arched and a streak of lightning in the background bears out the menace.

CHRISTMAS spirit seizes the International Tennis Federation in good time and Munich. In case the $100,000 for first-round losers in the Grand Slam Cup seemed stingy the tournament director Bill Dennis, dressed as Mother Goose, attended the players' party on the eve of the event with three live geese and a basket of golden eggs. Some were chocolate, others numbered for prizes. Boris Becker drew best: a £2,000 lap-top computer, likewise for just turning up.

BOLTON Wanderers' secretary Des McBain recently received a telephone call from the Premier League telling him their match against Leeds, scheduled for Boxing Day, had been selected for live coverage on Sky and would be moved to the following day. He was then told that Bolton would be getting no more home matches on Sky until March as "Sky don't go anywhere in January and February without under-soil heating". Bolton installed it in 1979. So much for Sky's total grip of football.

Rugby League

Home rule expected to increase entertainment value

Paul Fitzpatrick

FOUR rule changes designed to increase the game's entertainment value come into force in all English competitions from next Monday.

There will be no striking at the play-the-ball; the ball must be played backwards at the play-the-ball; scrums will be taken 20 metres from touch instead of 10 metres; and the scoring team will restart play from any score.

The first two changes, though they may take away some of the game's uncertainty, are designed to complete the tidying up of the rucks which started last season when lying-on was punished more stringently.

The new scrum ruling will, according to Maurice Lindsay, the game's chief executive, "open up a wide range of attacking options", and the change in the restart "will ensure excitement right up to the final hooter".

This last change is particularly welcome. Under the current rule, the side who score regain possession from the restart. For a team getting badly beaten, this can prove a merciless punishment.

Oldham's David Bradbury resumes his career tonight in a second-team game at Salford after a seven-month ban, one of the longest ever imposed.

He was suspended in April after an incident in which Castleford's Lee Harland suffered a broken jaw. "I have learned a tough lesson. Now I am keen to put all this behind me," said the 23-year-old.

The Sheffield Eagles prop Paul Dixon has been ruled out of tonight's Championship game against the bottom club Workington by suspension. The 33-year-old was banned for one match yesterday for a reckless high tackle in Sunday's 33–8 win at Warrington.

Leeds's prop Barrie McDermott escaped a ban when it was decided that his sending-off at Warrington last week for a "mistimed shoulder charge" was sufficient punishment.

Sport in brief

Ice Hockey

Steve Moria's reclassification as British reopens the Cardiff Devils' import slot, *writes Vic Batchelder*. Their target, possibly as player-manager, is Doug Smail, 38, a Canadian who played 845 NHL games.

Pat Schafhauser, a 24-year-old American with Lugano, is paralysed after breaking his back when crashing into the barrier during a league match against Davos. In October a Swedish player, Bengt Akerblom, was killed when an opponent's blade caught his throat. Throat-guards are now mandatory in Sweden.

Boxing

The former world heavyweight champion Mike Tyson left the 6ft 2in Nate Tubbs in a crumpled heap yesterday while sparring in Philadelphia for his fight with Buster Mathis Jr tomorrow week.

Table Tennis

Desmond Douglas, the 11-times national champion who made a remarkable international comeback for England in May, will be non-playing team captain against Germany at Hastings on Tuesday, *writes Richard Jago*. England must win this European Superleague match to avoid the relegation play-offs in the new year.

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Cricket

Tour match: Boland v England XI, first day

Sleepy wicket dogs Crawley

Mike Selvey, in Paarl, tastes a less than vintage day by the vineyards of the Cape

AFTER the tension and frenzy of Johannesburg, the vineyards north of Cape Town must feel like Alka-Seltzer in an acid stomach for the England team.

A former showground, the Boland Stadium is only a couple of years old, spacious and tree-ringed, with white Mediterranean-type architecture. Beyond, the crags and peaks of the Drakenstein Mountains glower down to make a spectacular setting.

The rottweilers, on leashes fortunately, that patrolled the environs during the day were clearly there not to prevent pitch invasions — at Bloemfontein an England supporter was bitten by an alsatian after running on to the outfield: happily, the dog survived — but to stop anyone leaving.

It was a desperately dull day in idyllic sunlit surroundings that deserved better.

A year ago when the New Zealanders came here, the match was abandoned two balls into the second day after 20 wickets had fallen on the first, the pitch deemed too dangerous. Now, abetted by an outfield that would register a negative Stimpmeter reading and could harbour a lost tribe, this game was in danger only of falling into the arms of Morpheus.

Batting first, none of the England batsmen was able — or perhaps even willing, since next week's pitch in Durban is potentially grassy — to make the adjustment from the pacier Wanderers pitch, and by the close they had reached 263 for eight from 107 overs.

Graham Thorpe top-scored with 56 but there was also an unbeaten 45 from Jack Russell, scored in only three hours — positively skittish progress after his Wanderers stonewall.

However, John Crawley, prospective No. 3 in the third Test, struggled more than most, hitting one square-driven boundary and a couple of singles in a 41-ball innings which ended when, from down the pitch, he attempted to break the shackles of Bryan Drew's off-spin and was stumped for six.

With the World Cup in mind, though, Raymond Illingworth cannot but have been impressed by Phil DeFreitas's bowling for Boland late in the day.

Having opened the bowling with scant success — six overs for 17 runs — DeFreitas had contributed nothing more until the second new ball. But eight subsequent overs from the Duke of the Dot Ball brought him the wicket of Peter Martin at no further cost whatsoever. Any capacity to reel off maiden overs, even in such helpful conditions, is a talent worth rubies in limited-overs cricket.

England, however, have their minds more on next week's Test than on the World Cup, and privately will have been wondering about the value, no matter how stunning the scenery, generous the hospitality and relaxed the atmosphere, of playing such a match in these conditions.

It is not incumbent on the home authorities to go out of their way to accommodate the tourists' preparation, and there is no reason to suggest subterfuge here. But three times, in Kimberley, Bloemfontein and now here, England have been forced to conduct their pre-Test match practice on pitches and against bowling that bears no resemblance to anything they would expect to encounter in the internationals. It is unhelpful at best.

Under the circumstances the result was as good as could have been expected. Robin Smith, opening in place of the resting Mike Atherton, dominated his 54-run stand with Alec Stewart before his off stump disappeared, and after Crawley's 45-minute interlude Stewart, who like Smith had made 39, drove loosely and was bowled.

At least Thorpe managed to hit seven boundaries without remotely discovering his timing before he edged one that spun away, and both Hick (32) and Watkinson (24) opted successfully for the aerial route before Hick chopped Claude Henderson's left-arm spin on to his stumps and Watkinson was superbly caught low down at short extra cover as he drove the same bowler.

It was all too much even for the dogs, however. Long before play finished they had given up all thoughts of ripping the seat out of a pair of trousers and nodded off.

ENGLAND
First innings

R A Smith b Stelling	39
*A J Stewart b Stelling	39
J P Crawley st L'M Germishuys b Drew	6
G A Thorpe c L'M Germishuys b Drew	56
G A Hick b Henderson	32
†R C Russell not out	45
M Watkinson c Stelling b Henderson	24
D Gough b Willoughby	3
P J Martin c L'M Germishuys b DeFreitas	3
R K Illingworth not out	7
Extras (lb5, w1, nb3)	9
Total (for 8, 107 overs)	263

Fall of wickets: 54, 74, 113, 160, 180, 217, 224, 233.

To bat: M C Ilott.

Bowling: DeFreitas 14–9–17–1; Willoughby 17–1–63–1; Stelling 13–4–38–2; Henderson 35–13–66–2; Drew 28–4–77–2

BOLAND: L D Ferreira, B C Baguley, K C Jackson, T Lazard, *A P Kuiper, W F Stelling, †L'M Germishuys, P A J DeFreitas, C W Henderson, C M Willoughby, B J Drew.

Umpires: M Bagus and R Brooks.

Six and out . . . John Crawley, batting in England's problem No. 3 position, is stumped by Louis-Marc Germishuys yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: CLIVE MASON

Emburey to advise rethink on World Cup itinerary

JOHN EMBUREY, the England A team manager, will advise Raymond Illingworth to rethink part of his World Cup planning because of the lack of practice facilities and the unreliable weather encountered by the A team in Pakistan.

During the tour, which continues with today's third Test against Pakistan A in Peshawar, Emburey has been compiling a dossier of what England can expect when they arrive for the World Cup tournament next February and March.

"It might be worth England staying on an extra couple of days in India, following their opening match against New Zealand at Ahmedabad on February 14, because then they will be assured of good weather and will know they have a good standard of net facilities," Emburey said. "I'm not criticising the Pakistan authorities, because we have been made very welcome and we have been looked after very well."

● Nottinghamshire have signed the 31-year-old Yorkshire opening batsman Ashley Metcalfe on a two-year contract.

Leave Lara alone, says Hall

BRIAN LARA, who pulled out of the current West Indies tour of Australia at the last minute, should be left alone and allowed to sort out his career, the team's manager Wes Hall said yesterday.

Hall said he had not recommended any punishment for Lara to the West Indies Cricket Board of Control, saying such matters should be left to the board. "I think that what you all should do is to leave Brian Lara alone and let him and the board work out their problems," he said. "Pressure is what turns a rock into diamond but it can turn it into dust."

The New South Wales spinner David Freedman claimed a career-best eight for 47 as West Indies were dismissed for 238 on the opening day of their four-day match in Newcastle.

Racing

Callisoe adds to Sherwood woe

Ron Cox

LARGE ACTION hobbled out of the Champion Hurdle reckoning when injuring a near-fore suspensory ligament during his preparation for tomorrow's Bula Hurdle at Cheltenham.

Jamie Osborne, his regular partner, switches to Mysilv, who was cut two points to 6-1 second favourite by Ladbrokes for the Champion. Montelado is their 4-1 favourite.

A last fence fall by 5-1 on shot Callisoe Bay at Nottingham yesterday completed a dismal week for Sherwood, who also announced that Berude Not To was out for the season.

There has also been injuries to the chaser Auburn Castle plus the promising bumper horses, Donnington and Sierra Bay.

Bear Claw, too, is under a bit of a cloud, I gather. But whether this catalogue of disaster is related in any way to a new gallop used by the Sherwood string this season only time will tell.

Sherwood was careful to put things in perspective. Speaking at Nottingham yesterday, he said: "It's not the end of the world. At least we are not like some people in Bosnia who are starving.

"I hope Large Action will be back in work next August. The intention is to go hurdling again next season."

The Champion Hurdle market, already rocked by the setbacks to Relkeel and Danoli, is still riddled with ifs and buts.

Alderbrook, 5-2 with a run in Ladbrokes' book, has yet to prove his fitness, the luckless Montelado had to miss his recent comeback race over timber, and Fortune And Fame has yet to reappear.

At least Ernie Pick, owner of Alderbrook, had some upbeat news to impart yesterday: "Alderbrook has started cantering and, fingers crossed, he will be at Cheltenham next March," he said.

"I would like to think that he could run in the Irish Champion Hurdle in January and I have told Kim Bailey to get him there if he possibly can. But even if he went to Cheltenham without a prep we wouldn't be bothered.

"I keep reading that Alderbrook injured a knee but the problem was to a lower joint on his near-fore leg.

"All that was wrong was there were some foreign objects floating around which needed removing. It was never really a big deal."

As for Montelado, trainer Pat Flynn was also in positive mood. "It was only a slight cold that kept him away from Fairyhouse and we are now hoping to go over to England at Christmas," he said.

"All being well he will run in the Bonusprint Hurdle at Kempton, otherwise he could contest the December Hurdle at Leopardstown."

However, jump fans have seen the last of Remittance Man, whose retirement was announced by trainer Nicky Henderson yesterday.

Last of four runners on his reappearance behind Lonesome Glory at Sandown last week, the 11-year-old has suffered a reccurence of his old leg trouble.

"Although not serious, we don't want to risk any further injury. He will retire to his owner's place where he will spend the rest of his days with his long-suffering companion, Nobby the sheep," said Henderson.

At his best Remittance Man was a high-class chaser. He retires the winner of 13 of his 17 races over fences, including the 1993 Queen Mother Champion Chase.

Our Kris looks one in the Million at Cheltenham

THE Million In Mind Partnership struck gold with Mysilv in last year's Triumph Hurdle, and they could have a successor to that brave filly in Our Kris, *writes Ron Cox.*

A fluent winner on his hurdling bow at Newbury, the former Guy Harwood-trained colt meets his first important engagement at Cheltenham today when his target is, appropriately, the Million In Mind Novice Hurdle.

There is strong opposition, notably from the Ascot runner-up Danjing, but Our Kris (2.00) looked the part at Newbury where he jumped well and won in a fast time. He can get the sponsors their money back.

Although 6lb out of the handicap in the ASW Bill Love Memorial Gold Card Hurdle, Wee Windy (3.45) looks sure to go well.

He put up an improved display to beat Time For A Flutter and Pampillo by wide margins at Fontwell and they upheld the form next time.

Good ground suits Morstock (12.55), who can cash in on a lenient mark in the Southam Handicap Hurdle.

● Today's meeting at Hexham was called off last night because of snow. There is a 7.30 inspection at Doncaster where prospects are rated 75-25 in favour of racing. No inspection is planned at today's other meeting, Cheltenham

Doncaster

12.15 Yacht
12.45 Mr Moriarty
1.15 Go Universal (nb)
1.45 Young Dubliner
2.20 Time Won't Wait
2.55 Djais
3.30 Fairies Farewell

7.30 AM INSPECTION. Going: Good to firm. ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.15 GLASGOW PADDOCKS SELLING HURDLE 2m 110yds £2,177

12.45 DOORKNOCKER CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS NOVICE HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 110yds £2,140

1.15 VULMONT'S CLOWN HANDICAP CHASE 3m 2f 110yds £4,725

1.45 CARBON LINK LTD NOVICE CHASE 2m £3,730

2.20 DONCASTER RACECOURSE SPONSORSHIP CLUB HANDICAP CHASE 2m 110yds £4,414

2.55 SAUCY KIT NOVICE HURDLE 2m 4f £2,696

3.30 JULIET MARNY ONLY STANDARD OPEN NH FLAT RACE 2m 110yds £1,577

⊙ Blinkered for the first time — DONCASTER: 12.15 Baroski, See You Again; 12.45 Brackenthwaite; 1.15 Bas de Laine.

Cheltenham card with guide to the form

12.20 Shankar
12.55 Morstock
1.30 Ask The Governor
2.00 Our Kris
2.35 Dont Tell The Wife
3.10 Seven Towers
3.45 WEE WINDY (nap)

Going: Good. ★ Denotes blinkers.

12.20 CHELTENHAM SPONSORSHIP CLUB NOVICE HURDLE 2m 1f £3,746

12.55 SOUTHAM HANDICAP HURDLE 2m 1f £3,534

1.30 CHRISTIES FINE CONDITIONAL JOCKEYS' HANDICAP CHASE 3m 1f £4,331

Channel 4

2.00 MILLION IN MIND THREE YRS OLD NOVICE HURDLE 2m 1f £3,705

401	2111 ELATION (13) (D) G Richards 11-7	B Harding (3)
402	15 EXECUTIVE DESIGN (13) (BF) Mrs M Reveley 11-7	P Niven
403	01531 OCEAN HAWK (8) N Twiston-Davies 11-7	C Llewellyn
404	1 OUR KRIS (14) N Henderson 11-7	M A Fitzgerald
405	21 CHICODARI (26) (C) D Nicholson 11-3	W Marston
406	12 KIPPANOUR (31) C Mann 11-3	A P McCoy
407	0 BERKELEY BOUNDER (27) R McKellar 11-0	D Parker (3)
408	2 DANJING (20) S Sherwood 11-0	J Osborne
409	DECEIT THE SECOND P Rodford 11-0	S Burrough
410	DONAPPEL Mrs J Cecil 11-0	T Kent
411	DTOTO R Baker 11-0	B Powell
412	4 FORESTAL (26) S Griffiths 11-0	Mr J Jukes
413	F PACIFIC OVERTURE (14) C Barwell 10-9	B Clifford

Channel 4

2.35 ARTEC HANDICAP CHASE 3m 1f 110yds £10,883

Channel 4

3.10 CHRIS COLEY RACING NOVICE CHASE 2m 1f £4,656

Channel 4

3.45 ASW BILL LOVE MEMORIAL GOLD CARD HANDICAP HURDLE 3m 110yds £5,329

Results

FAKENHAM

12.10 (2m Hdle): 1, PROPHETS HONOUR, M Foster (7–2); **2, Cyrus The Great** (15–8 fav); **3, King of Babylon** (7–2). 9 ran. 15, 10. (P Haslam) Tote: £3.60; £1.40, £2.30, £2.10. Dual F £4.00. Trio: £9.90. CSF. £11.05.

12.40 (2m Hdle): 1, SALISONG, R Dunwoody (9–4 fav); **2, Lucy Tufty** (9–2); **3, Fierce** (7–1). 12 ran. 3, nk. (J Whyte) Tote: £2.90; £1.10, £1.90, £1.60. Dual F: £4.30. Trio: £11.10. CSF: £12.10. Tricast £55.76. NR: Pair of Jacks.

1.10 (2m Hdle): 1, LAST SPIN, R Supple (6–1), **2, Battleship Bruce** (2–1 fav); **3, Out On A Promise** (11–4). 9 ran. Nk, 1½. (J Jenkins) Tote: £5.60; £2.40, £1.50, £1.50. Dual F: £7.10. Trio: £26.60. CSF £18.40.

1.40 (3m 110yds Ch): 1, MANERBE, J F Titley (11–10 fav); **2, Hurryup** (3–1); **3, Victory Anthem** (14–1). 6 ran. 12, 1½. (N Callaghan) Tote: £3.10; £2.50, £1.60. Dual F: £3.20. CSF: £5.13.

2.10 (2m 110yds Ch): 1, DRIVING FORCE, J F Titley (13–8); **2, Dr Rocket** (6–5 fav); **3, Pusey Street Boy** (5–1). 4 ran. 2, 10. (Mrs M McCourt) Tote £2.50. Dual F: £1.10. CSF: £3.64

2.40 (2m 5f 110yds Ch): 1, ARTIC WINGS, M Brennan (11–10 fav); **2, Price Match** (9–4). **3, Adare Queen** (3–1). 4 ran. 6, 9. (O Brennan) Tote £1.60. Dual F. £2.00. CSF £3.63

3.10 (2m 4f Hdle): 1, VICEROY RULER, D Walsh (9–4 jnt-fav). **2, Pyramis Prince** (12–1); **3, Britannia Mills** (6–1). 9–4 jnt-fav Can Can Charlie. 8 ran. 7, ½. (J Jenkins) Tote: £4.70; £1.10, £1.60, £2.10. Dual F: £14.10. CSF: £27.32. Tricast £136.89.
QUADPOT: £18.30. **PLACEPOT:** £13.20.

NOTTINGHAM

12.30 (2m 5f 110yds Hdle): 1, BARRYBEN, R Massey (7–2); **2, Treweethan** (11–2); **3, Its Grand** (10–1). 9–4 Fav Wakt. 7 ran. 2½, 3. (W Brisbourne) Tote: £4.80; £2.60, £2.20. Dual F: £18.00. CSF: £21.66.

1.00 (2m Hdle): 1, MILL THYME, G Lee (5–1 jnt-fav); **2, Dally Boy** (8–1); **3, Wisdom** (7–1). 5–1 jnt-fav Nordic Breeze. 25 ran. 1½, 3½. (Mrs M Reveley) Tote: £5.10; £2.00, £3.90, £4.00. Dual F. £20.20. Trio: £18.10. CSF: £53.78.

1.30 (3m 3f 110yds Ch): 1, STUNNING STUFF, R Johnson (33–1); **2, Columcille** (15–8 fav); **3, Paper Star** (7–1). 7 ran. Dist, dist. (T George) Tote: £28.00; £4.20, £1.50. Dual F: £30.00. CSF: £68.18.

2.00 (2m Hdle): 1, CASTLE SWEEP, P Niven (4–7 fav); **2, Keep It Zipped** (100–30); **3, Macgeorge** (20–1). 12 ran. 5, 5. (D Nicholson) Tote: £1.80; £1.00, £1.40, £4.80. Dual F: £1.60. Trio: £29.50. CSF: £3.73. NR: Zitas Son.

2.30 (2m Hdle): 1, FOX SPARROW, A S Smith (7–1); **2, Zaitoon** (2–1); **3, Sulvez** (3–1). 6–4 fav Keep Your Distance. 4 ran. 8, 2. (N Tinkler) Tote: £6.80. Dual F: £0.00. CSF: £19.19. NR: Saint Ciel.

3.00 (2m Ch): 1, ASK TOM, R Garritty (5–1); **2, Nagobelia** (10–1). **3, Callisoe Bay** (1–5 fav). 4 ran. Dist, dist. (T Tate) Tote: £4.30. Dual F. £12.60. CSF: £31.18.

3.30 (2m): 1, ST MELLION DRIVE, O Burrows (5–2 fav); **2, Euphoric Illusion** (7–2); **3, Riding Crop** (11–2). 13 ran. ½, nk. (M Pipe) Tote: £2.00; £1.00, £1.80, £2.70. Dual F: £10.10. Trio: £35.70. CSF: £13.24. NR: Supreme Norman.
QUADPOT: £20.70.
PLACEPOT: £4,579.60.

TAUNTON

12.50 (3m 110yds Hdle): 1, NORMAN'S CONVINCED, D Bridgwater (10–11 fav); **2, Soul Trader** (11–2); **3, King Acrylic** (50–1). 9 ran. 2, 11. (M Pipe) Tote: £2.00; £1.40, £1.80, £6.50. Dual F: £2.90. Trio: £41.60. CSF: £6.55.

1.20 (2m 3f Ch): 1, FENWICK, T Dascombe (11–1); **2, Coolree** (20–1); **3, Take By Storm** (9–4 fav). 12 ran. ½, nk. (R Hodges) Tote: £9.40; £2.90, £7.90, £1.50. Dual F: £60.70. Trio. £335.60. CSF: £182.20. Tricast: £612.17.

1.50 (2m 1f Hdle): 1, LUCKY EDDIE, C Maude (12–1); **2, Garnwin** (12–1); **3, Mr Rundle** (6–1). 2–1 fav Show Faith. 14 ran. 1½, 4. (P Hobbs) Tote: £10.60; £2.60, £3.00, £3.60. Dual F: £51.00. Trio: £233.40. CSF: £142.30.

2.20 (3m 110yds Hdle): 1, TOUR LEADER, B Powell (9–1); **2, Royal Piper** (11–4); **3, Special Account** (20–1). 2–1 fav Lead Vocalist. 9 ran. Hd, 3. (R Buckler) Tote: £11.10; £2.60, £1.20, £2.40. Dual F: £10.60. Trio. £39.00. CSF: £31.28. Tricast: £436.20. NR: Cool Clown, River Island.

2.50 (3m Ch): 1, CERTAIN ANGLE, C Maude (9–4 fav); **2, Scotoni** (33–1); **3, Alice Smith** (9–1). 11 ran. 3, 15. (P Hobbs) Tote: £3.40; £2.10, £4.60, £2.70. Dual F: £35.10. Trio: £127.20. CSF: £61.42. Tricast: £535.20.

3.20 (2m 1f Hdle): 1, THE CAUMRUE, A P McCoy (7–2); **2, Sports View** (15–8 fav); **3, Nordic Valley** (9–2). 6 ran. Sh hd, 9. (G Balding) Tote: £4.60; £2.80, £1.70. Dual F: £4.60. CSF: £10.18.
QUADPOT: £20.40.
PLACEPOT: £749.50.
JACKPOT: Not won, £101,594.50 carried over to Cheltenham today.

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هكذا من الاصل

David Lacey on how Blackburn were tried and found wanting by Europe's minor aristocracy

Rovers exposed by class war

HEART-WARMING though it was on a cold night west of the Pennines, the nine-minute hat-trick against Rosenborg that propelled Mike Newell into Champions' League history could not allay the disappointment at Blackburn Rovers' failure to make any impact on the tournament when it mattered.

As the rest of Europe begins to relish the prospect of Ajax defending the Champions' Cup against Juventus in the final on May 22, English football can only look back longingly to the late Seventies and early Eighties, when Liverpool, Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa kept the trophy for seven years out of eight.

Since the post-Heysel ban was lifted, a succession of English champions have entered the European Cup only to become horizontal heavyweights. Leeds United, Arsenal, Manchester United (twice) and now Blackburn have all proved themselves unequal to its demands.

True, Manchester United and Arsenal have each won the Cup Winners' Cup during this period but that competition, compared with the Champions' League, is a selling-plater which could almost have been designed to give the English game a false sense of its own standing.

At least George Graham's Arsenal, like Frank Clark's Forest in this season's Uefa Cup, managed to get themselves organised behind the ball and make life difficult for superior foreign technicians.

Blackburn were doomed once they decided against the immediate strengthening of a team who, though they had shown defensive resilience and attacking opportunism in winning the Premiership, plainly lacked the nous to succeed in Europe.

As it transpired, they also lacked the immediate presence of the one man at Ewood Park qualified to give them a grounding in what was required. Though Ray Harford had always looked after the nuts and bolts of running the team, Kenny Dalglish's sudden elevation to director of football deprived Blackburn of an experienced presence on the bench when it was needed most.

In Harford they had a senior NCO when the situation required a touch of SAS. Routine grumbles about two games a week, mounting injuries and an antipathetic media could not disguise the fact that Blackburn blew the best opportunity an English club had been given to qualify for the last eight from the Champions' League.

Once Legia Warsaw had removed Gothenburg, Manchester United's ultimate conquerors last season, from the preliminary round, and Rosenborg had beaten Besiktas, a weak group was guaranteed and Blackburn found themselves in it. Future English champions will be lucky to get such a friendly draw.

Paradoxically, the influence of the European television companies, including ITV, in getting the Champions' League reorganised in order to guarantee certain countries a minimum of six matches has worked against England's chances of regaining its former status.

Before the Heysel tragedy, Liverpool's seeding more or less made sure they would not be overtaxed in the first two rounds of the European Cup. Now the winners of the Premiership are thrust straight into the Champions' League in September with little chance to shake off any early-season torpor.

So what of next season's English wannabees? Would Newcastle United or Manchester United, the first English club to win the European Cup, fare any better than Blackburn Rovers?

Given a similar group it is hard to believe that either would not get through, although the prospect of any English side taking on Ajax, Juventus, Spartak and Real Madrid with impunity continues to recede.

Alex Ferguson would now have less difficulty fielding the minimum of six English players required by Uefa, and restrictions on foreigners would not be a problem for Newcastle. But Manchester United's fledglings and Kevin Keegan's high-fliers would still find Europe daunting.

Although Eric Cantona and Peter Beardsley are experienced internationally, neither has played much in the European tournaments. And neither Keegan nor Ferguson has defenders trained in the art of getting tight on opponents for whom football is a game of Continental chess as opposed to English draughts.

● Spartak Moscow's celebrations at reaching the quarter-finals have been spoilt by the departures of their coach Oleg Romantsev and defender Viktor Onopko. Romantsev has resigned to prepare Russia for next summer's European Championship, and Onopko is joining Atletico Madrid.

Champions' League: final group tables

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	6	3	2	1	7	3	11
Nantes	6	2	3	1	8	6	9
FC Porto	6	1	4	1	6	5	7
Aalborg	6	1	1	4	5	12	4

Qualifiers: Panathinaikos, Nantes

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spartak Moscow	6	6	0	0	15	4	18
Legia Warsaw	6	2	1	3	5	8	7
Rosenborg	6	2	0	4	11	16	6
Blackburn Rvrs	6	1	1	4	5	8	4

Qualifiers: Spartak Moscow, Legia Warsaw

GROUP C

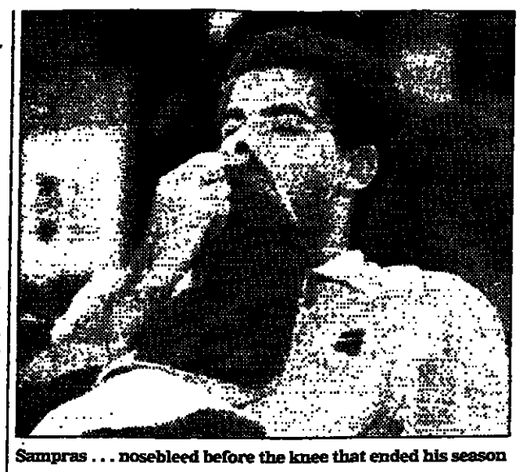
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	6	4	1	1	15	4	13
B Dortmund	6	2	3	1	8	8	9
S Bucharest	6	1	3	2	2	5	6
Glasgow Rngrs	6	0	3	3	6	14	3

Qualifiers: Juventus, Borussia Dortmund

GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	6	5	1	0	15	1	16
Real Madrid	6	3	1	2	11	5	10
Ferencvaros	6	1	2	3	9	19	5
G Zurich	6	0	2	4	3	13	2

Qualifiers: Ajax Amsterdam, Real Madrid



Sampras . . . nosebleed before the knee that ended his season

Sampras has to default

David Irvine sees a long season take its final toll in Munich

THIS was not the way Pete Sampras wanted his year to end. The American was last night forced to default his Grand Slam Cup quarter-final with Goran Ivanisevic here today because of an injured right knee.

His first-round victory on Wednesday, it seems, was a match too far. "I woke up this morning and couldn't straighten out my leg," he said. "I saw the doctor, we did some tests and they showed some fluid behind the knee. At this point it is in my best interests to go home and rest up. I can't play."

Sampras added that the trouble dated back to last Friday's opening singles in the Davis Cup final in Moscow, when he beat Andrei Chesnokov in a demanding five-set match and had to be dragged from the court suffering from cramp. Though he won the doubles and his second singles, he said yesterday: "The cup took a lot more out of me than I thought. My body just broke down."

The Davis Cup, which he won almost single-handed, was the crowning glory of a year in which he claimed the Wimbledon and US Open titles, then regained the No. 1 ranking from Andre Agassi. This was a sad sequel.

Ten minutes after Sampras pulled out, Andrei Medvedev, who arrived in Munich last Saturday in a wheelchair, having twisted his ankle two days earlier, and then underwent "a miracle cure" in Salzburg, retired when 6–3, 3–6, 4–0 down to Todd Martin. Tomorrow's semi-finals, therefore, will be Martin versus Boris Becker and either Jacco Eltingh or Yevgeny Kafelnikov versus Ivanisevic.

Today's depleted programme will be bolstered by an exhibition match between the two stand-bys, David Wheaton, who won the cup in 1991, and the Romanian Adrian Voinea, who at the French Open defeated Becker, now a strong favourite here.

It is an unexpected cast list which underlines again that the date for this £4 million extravaganza is wrong. Coming on the heels of the ATP Championships and the Davis Cup final, it puts too big a strain on some top players.

While Sampras bade farewell to a possible $2 million (£1.3 million) — he still collected more than $750,000 — Becker continued his imperious way with a 7–6, 6–1 dismissal of Byron Black. Other than Sampras, who beat him in Bercy and Frankfurt last month, the German has no peer on an indoor court. But few critics believe his impressive end-of-year surge will have much relevance in next year's major outdoor championships.

Of the 14 titles Becker has claimed since winning his fifth and last Grand Slam crown at the Australian Open almost six years ago, all but three have come on fast carpet courts. With neither wind nor sun to bother him, and a predictable and even bounce, his game still has all the necessary elements for indoor success. Outdoors it is a different story.

Yesterday's events strengthen his chance of completing an unprecedented ATP Championship and Grand Slam Cup double. In a stadium favouring the heavy serve, Becker could hardly be in better shape to pull it off. "I don't remember ever serving like I have for the last three or four weeks. I feel that on both serves I'm capable of hitting aces, and that puts a lot of pressure on my opponents."

Black, who plays two-handed on both flanks, stuck with Becker throughout the first set but, after being outplayed in the tie-break, was swept away by the German's force. Becker eventually added 17 aces to the 20 he hit in the first round.

Labour plans task force to point the way

John Duncan

THE Labour party launched its Framework for Football yesterday, promising to set up a task force to look at the problems the game faces and claiming to offer "a new vision" for the game. At least one leading football academic was unimpressed.

"It's certainly a document full of laudable sentiments," said John Williams of the Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research at Leicester University. "It presses all the right buttons but it's terribly vague. Much of the document is basically statements that it would be hard for anyone to disagree with, even in the Conservative party. It talks about measures when it's really talking about sentiments."

Aside from the task force, Labour's most controversial commitment is to prosecute in Britain those football hooligans who commit offences abroad and are merely deported.

"We've always been told that this was impractical," said Williams, "because of the difficulties of evidence and the costs of ferrying witnesses and victims from abroad over here. If that is no longer the case, it would be an interesting development."

Labour says it will use provisions of the European Convention on Spectator Violence to make sure that, if foreign courts will not deal with British hooligans on their soil, British ones will.

Labour also wants an increase in the use of restriction orders, which force a football offender to report to authorities at the time of matches. Only three have been issued in the past three years, says Labour.

The charter states Labour's commitment to strengthening the laws on racial abuse, the tightening of financial regulations in the game, setting standards of stewarding and ensuring that major sporting events, particularly the FA Cup final, are available on terrestrial television.

A Labour government would set up the task force immediately, independently chaired but primarily composed of representatives of the football authorities, with player and fan delegates thrown in for good measure. It will be given a year to come up with proposals on a variety of subjects including the treatment of fans, the links between football and television, and football finance.

Though recognising that legislation on some issues of concern to supporters such as ticket prices is impractical, Labour believes a dialogue that involves supporters may at least make clubs more aware of fans' needs.

"For people who are serious about changing football this document presents an opportunity," said Dr Jack Cunningham, the shadow Secretary of State for National Heritage. "For people who are seeking practical ways to initiate change in football the document is intended to be helpful and positive."

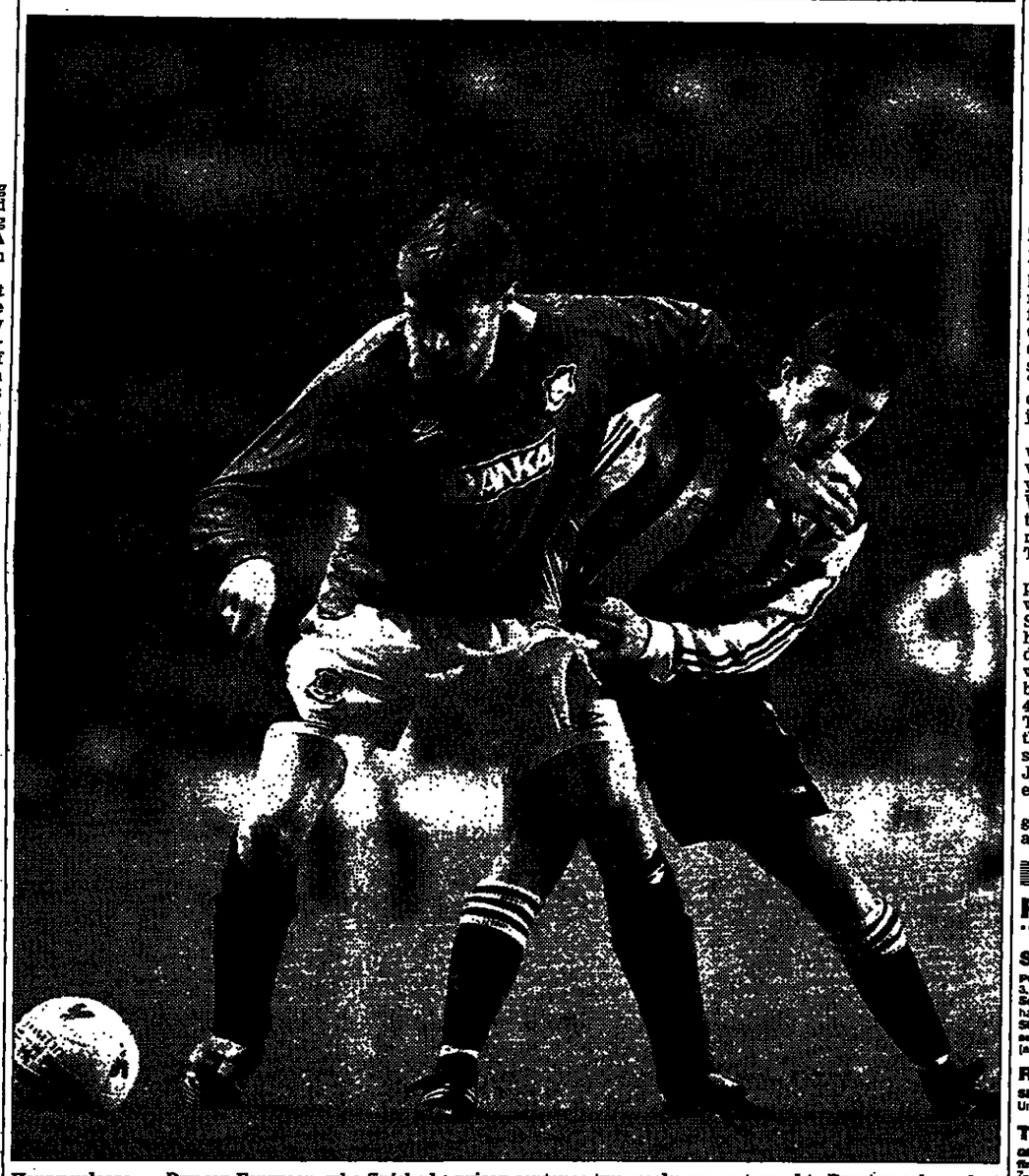
Reactions from the Premier League, the Football Association, the Professional Footballers' Association and the Football Supporters' Association were favourable.

"It's a useful starting point," said Rick Parry, the Premier League's chief executive. "We're happy to enter into a positive dialogue."

"If the task force is a force for good, it won't be unwelcome," said David Davies for the FA.

"It says a lot of things that have never been said before," said Tim Crabbe, the FSA chairman. "The task force has limitless potential and the charter explicitly recognises the need to have supporters in government bodies."

FERGUSON RETURNS TO A RAPTUROUS WELCOME



Happy release . . . Duncan Ferguson, who finished a prison sentence two weeks ago, returned to Everton colours last night in a reserve match against Newcastle United at Goodison Park. The Scottish striker scored the last two goals in his side's emphatic 5–0 victory to warm a crowd of some 10,000 PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

The Bridge's big guns fall silent

Martin Thorpe

IN THE end President Clinton was not needed. Chelsea's warring factions agreed a ceasefire between themselves yesterday which should halt hostilities at Stamford Bridge — for the time being at least.

Chelsea's first board meeting since the chairman Ken Bates banned the club's mega-rich director Matthew Harding from the directors' box and confiscated his car-park pass ended with an emollient public statement read out by the company secretary and a rare public silence from the two protagonists.

"Discussions are proceeding on the best way forward to finance and achieve Chelsea Football Club's future aspirations," said the statement, which added that the pair had agreed not to make further press comment while these discussions are taking place.

It did, however, add that the two will "lunch and sit together at the Newcastle match on Saturday". Presumably Bates has also reinstated the car-park pass, which was, anyway, a minor inconvenience to Harding, who usually walks to home games from his local pub 100 yards away on the Kings Road.

Lifting the directors' box ban, though, was a pre-condition laid down by Harding before he would agree to Bates's request to discuss "how much he's prepared to put into the club, what players he intends to buy and how much he intends to offer me [to leave]". It was to elicit this very information that Bates banned Harding in the first place.

Which goes to prove what Harding has probably now realised: that Bates is not a person to be opposed lightly. And what Bates has always realised is that he needs Harding's money to help finance the team and ground.

So, after a public spat conducted through the tabloid newspapers, rather as a feuding married couple might communicate through the children, the pair finally seem insulted-out and now appear ready to try to resolve their differences in a more constructive and peaceful atmosphere.

Whether those differences can be sorted out remains to be seen. Whether Bates and Harding can learn to work together or whether one of them has to leave also remains to be seen. But stranger things have happened. Chelsea did once win the FA Cup.

Red tinto brings bags of trouble for prone Ranger

Patrick Glenn can see little hope of reform after Paul Gascoigne's latest dismissal

THE two-match suspension that Paul Gascoigne begins this weekend is unlikely to be a long enough cooling-off period to allow the tortured Rangers and England midfielder to mend his ways.

If 11 years of competing at the highest levels of the game — punctuated in turn by brilliant inventiveness, sordid behaviour and lengthy absences through injury — has not corrected the faults, what price a short sabbatical?

Gascoigne is a master of the perceived injustice. It was his tendency to magnify the importance of an everyday refereeing decision which led to his ordering-off against Borussia Dortmund on Wednesday.

When he flicked the ball against Patrick Berger's hand, the referee, Manuel Diaz Vega, ruled it accidental handball and allowed play to continue. The same thing had only just happened at the other end, where the Rangers defender Alan McLaren inadvertently handled and benefited from the referee's judgment.

Unlike Gascoigne, however, no German player ran the length of the pitch to chew the referee's ear. In addition, Gascoigne had been warned by Vega a minute earlier about mouthing his displeasure when the Spaniard insisted that Rangers take a free-kick from the spot where the offence had occurred.

Gascoigne is also an incomparably bad tackler. The irresponsible lunge at Andreas Möller, which brought his first yellow card in Dortmund, mirrored challenges on Tiberiu Csik of Steaua Bucharest in September and John Collins of Celtic last month, both similarly earning cautions.

In each case the opponents were in no position to score. That makes Gascoigne's tackling not only crude but irrational. Whatever preventative measures his manager Walter Smith may be contemplating, he should perhaps start by banning his player from attempts at ball-winning.

At least Smith has publicly acknowledged that there is a problem. Until his after-match comments on Wednesday, the best anyone could expect from Rangers over Gascoigne's behaviour was defiant defence.

"It's happening too often," said the manager, "and he'll have to have a good look at himself."

Perhaps significantly, it took a Spanish referee, unencumbered by thoughts of the consequences, finally to dismiss Gascoigne. There has been a marked reluctance among Scottish officials to do so, as though fearful of the accompanying notoriety.

Most notable was the refusal of John Rowbotham to take action in the match against Aberdeen on November 11. It was left to the SFA's disciplinary committee to deem his actions worthy of a red card and order a one-match ban. He has to miss another game because his cautions have taken him over the 16-point limit allowed under the automatic-suspension system.

It is Smith's misfortune that he can talk to Gascoigne until his face is as blue as his team's jerseys but any reform will have to come from the player himself.

Portsmouth buy-out goes ahead

THE South Coast's sleeping giant Portsmouth has been stirred if not yet shaken by the takeover of a six-man consortium based in Manchester, *writes Mark Redding*.

Under the deal, likely to be finalised on Monday, the consortium is to assume the club's debts, running at £11,000 a week. It has pledged a £5 million investment and will build a 35,000-seat stadium.

No figures have been released but when the deal was first proposed in November, the consortium offered £400,000 to buy the players and staff from the club's owners, the Gregory family. Fratton Park was to be leased to the consortium while the new stadium was being built.

Meanwhile Fulham and Gillingham have been charged by the Football Association with misconduct after their rancorous Third Division match on November 25.

The European Court of Justice said that it would announce its final decision on the Marc Bosman transfer case next Friday.

Roy Keane, who had a hernia operation five weeks ago, will not be fit for the Republic of Ireland's European Championship play-off against Holland next Wednesday.

HOLLAND (from): Van der Sar, De Goey, Reiziger, Blind, Bogarde, Numan, De Kock, R de Boer, Davids, Witschge, Seedorf, Winter, Kluivert, Overmars, Bergkamp, Helder, Mulder

Results

Soccer

PONTINS LEAGUE: First Division: Stoke 3, Nottm Forest 3; Everton 5, Newcastle 0. **Second Division:** Huddersfield 2, Rotherham 0.
SOUTH AMERICAN SUPERCUP: First, second leg: Flamengo 1, Independiente 0 (agg: 1–2).

Rugby Union

SECOND XV VARSITY MATCH: Oxford Univ Greyhounds 7, Cambridge Univ LX 8.

Tennis

GRAND SLAM CUP (Munich): **Quarter-finals: B Becker** (Ger) bt B Black (Zim) 7–6, 6–1; **T Martin** (US) bt A Medvedev (Ukr) 6–3, 3–6, 4–0 ret.

Basketball

NBA: Charlotte 94, Cleveland 82; Boston 105, Miami 101; Philadelphia 108, Dallas 87; Washington 96, Atlanta 78; Chicago 101, New York 94; Minnesota 108, New Jersey 97; Houston 112, LA Lakers 99; Orlando 109, Golden State 107.

Cricket

FOUR-DAY MATCH (Newcastle, Aus): West Indies 238 (C Hooper 83, S Campbell 53; Freedman 8–47); New South Wales 13–0.

Ice Hockey

NHL: Hartford 7, NY Islanders 4; Montreal 4, New Jersey 2; NY Rangers 5, Chicago 5 (ot); Tampa Bay 2, Anaheim 1; Los Angeles 6, Winnipeg 3.

Alpine Skiing

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP (Val d'Isere): **Super-giant Slalom:** 1, A Meissnitzer (Aut) 1min 14.58sec; 2, H Zeller-Baehler (Switz) 1.14.97; 3, M Suhadolc (Slo) 1.15.13; 4, C Montillet (Fr) 1.15.18; 5, I H Marken (Nor) 1.15.19; 6, K Seizinger (Ger) 1.15.40; 7, M Ertl (Ger) 1.15.44; 8, T Schneider (Aut) 1.15.46; 9, A Wachter (Aut) 1.15.55; 10, H Zurbriggen (Switz) 1.15.56; 11, M Dorfmeister (Aut) 1.15.58; 12, K Gutensohn (Ger) 1.15.60; 13, P Wiberg (Swe) 1.15.65; 14, R Cavagnoud (Fr) 1.15.67; 15, P Street (US) 1.15.87. **Super-giant World Cup standings:** 1, Ertl 136pts; 2, Meissnitzer 122; 3=, Zeller-Baehler, Seizinger 120. **Overall standings:** 1, Seizinger 220pts; 2, Ertl 151; 3, Meissnitzer 148. **Nations Cup standings:** 1, Austria 1,887pts; 2, Switzerland 1,333; 3, Norway 985.

Snooker

GERMAN OPEN (Frankfurt): **Quarter-finals: J Higgins** (Scot) bt D Morgan (Wales) 5–4.

Squash

MAHINDRA CHALLENGE (Bombay): **First round: M Cairns** (Eng) bt D Jenson (Aus) 15–5, 15–4, 9–15, 17–16; **S Parke** (Eng) bt A Faizy (Egypt) 15–5, 15–5, 15–10; **P Coutier** (Eng) bt T Hands (Eng) 15–9, 15–3, 9–15, 15–13; **C Walker** (Eng) bt O Elboiessy (Egypt) 15–11, 15–10, 14–17, 15–9; **S Meads** (Eng) bt H Wilms (Ger) 13–6 ret; **C van der Walth** (SA) bt A Hill (Aus) 17–15, 15–2, 15–0; **J Boestat** (Fr) bt P Gregory (Gr) 15–6, 15–6, 15–8; **D Ryan** (Ire) bt D Harris (Eng) 8–15, 15–9, 7–15, 15–10, 15–10; **A Kirkland** (Eng) bt M Clark (US) 15–8, 11–15, 11–15, 15–5, 15–7; **B Davis** (Aus) bt A Al Ghareeb (Kuw) 15–2, 15–12, 15–8; **P Nicol** (Scot) bt A Barada (Egypt) 15–11, 10–15, 15–3, 11–15, 15–8; **R Sykes** (Aus) bt M Heath (Scot) 8–15, 15–11, 13–15, 15–12, 15–9; **D Stockings** (Eng) bt A Singh (India) 15–10, 15–9, 15–13; **B Martin** (Aus) bt D Preece (UAE) 15–5, 15–1, 15–8; **M Chakravarty** (Eng) bt F Usandizaga (Arg) 15–8, 15–7, 15–5.

Fixtures

(7.30 unless stated)

Soccer

LEAGUE OF IRELAND: Premier Division: Athlone Tn v Drogheda Utd (8.0); Shelbourne v UCD.

Rugby League

STONES CENTENARY CHAMPIONSHIP: Sheffield v Workington.
BARLA YOUTH TOUR MATCH: Lancashire U-18 v Australia (Leigh).
ALLIANCE: Salford v Oldham (8.0).

Cricket

THIRD A TEST (five days, 5.0 am): **Peshawar:** Pakistan A v England A.

● The 21-year-old Australian all-rounder Shane Lee is Somerset's main target as overseas player in pace of Mushtaq Ahmed. The county's director of coaching Bob Cottam has been to Australia to watch the New South Wales player who is keen to experience county cricket here.

● Helped by a grant from the Scottish Sports Council, the Scottish Athletics Federation is to offer contracts to its 20 most promising 20 competitors, which would facilitate grants for warm-weather training and extra competition. Established stars like Yvonne Murray, Liz McColgan and Tom McKean are unlikely to benefit.

● Europe's Ryder Cup team, winners in America for only the second time, are runaway winners of the Golf Writers' Trophy for 1995. Annika Sorenstam topped both the United States and European money lists, Colin Montgomerie scored an Order of Merit hat-trick and Britain and Ireland regained the Walker Cup, but Bernard Gallacher's side received nearly 70 per cent of the votes.

● John Higgins, crushed 9–1 by Stephen Hendry in the UK snooker semi-finals, yesterday beat Darren Morgan 5–4 to reach the inaugural German Open semi-finals in Frankfurt. Tomorrow he meets David Roe or Alan McManus.

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SKI CLUB Sport ©The Guardian

English clubs target Springboks, page 13

Crawley blows his big chance, page 14

Injured Sampras pulls out of Munich, page 15

Labour launches plan for football, page 15

SportsGuardian

LEICESTER CHAIRMAN CLAIMS BREACH OF CONTRACT

Ian Ross and **Neil Robinson** on the fall-out from yesterday's resignation by Leicester's manager of 12 months

Wolves on the prowl as McGhee walks out

MARK McGHEE is expected to be installed as Wolverhampton Wanderers' manager next week after dramatically walking out on Leicester City yesterday.

His departure drew a furious response from Leicester's chairman Martin George, who accused McGhee of being in breach of contract for failing to turn up for training yesterday morning.

The Leicester captain Steve Walsh, who has been put in temporary charge of team affairs, said: "If Mark goes to Wolves I hope they get relegated. All the players are very upset. They want to prove to him that what he's done is wrong. We feel that what's happened is a disgrace."

Wolves, who lie 18 places below Leicester in the First Division but have far greater financial resources, offered no comment on the situation yesterday. To allow the protests to die down they may delay the announcement of McGhee's appointment until after their game at Luton on Sunday.

McGhee, along with his managerial team of Colin Lee and Mike Hickman, tendered a written resignation late on Wednesday night after rejecting the terms of a new and vastly improved deal which would have made him one of the highest-paid managers in British football.

He had made no secret of his desire to succeed Graham Taylor at Molineux and was annoyed that Leicester refused him the chance to discuss the situation with the Wolves chairman Jonathan Hayward last week. McGhee said he "deserved the opportunity" to better himself in football.

It was that desire which originally led him to Leicester after the equally acrimonious departure of his predecessor Brian Little 12 months ago. Little also walked out with his coaching staff and he was appointed manager of Aston Villa two weeks later. That in turn led to McGhee leaving Reading for Filbert Street.

George was a bitter and angry man yesterday after spending almost 10 hours on Wednesday attempting to convince McGhee that his future lay with Leicester.

"At a time like this it is difficult to talk about loyalty," he said. "This has disappointed me greatly; I am not at all happy.

"We have received three undated resignation letters and we have responded by saying that the resignations have not been accepted and will not be accepted. Technically it is breach of contract."

It is believed that George put together a package for McGhee worth some £1 million over the next three years at Filbert Street.

"We offered terms far in excess of what should normally have been necessary," he said. "Clearly he would have been in the top five [managerial earners] in the country. The board not only bent over backwards but did so to a length that made some of us doubt our judgment in these matters."

George is contemplating legal action to prevent McGhee leaving, although similar moves proved unsuccessful after Little's departure last year. Leicester went to the High Court seeking £500,000 compensation and the case was thrown out, but the two clubs eventually came to a deal over Little and his two assistants.

That case — and McGhee's departure from Reading — served to emphasise the inability of clubs to hang on to managers intent on leaving.

Last summer the Premier League agreed a managers' charter in response to several high-profile case of managerial poaching. Under its terms a manager is allowed to move mid-contract only if a club releases his registration.

However, the Football League was not party to the charter and a spokesman said yesterday that it had no immediate plans to institute it, adding that the League's existing rules on poaching were "watertight". Regulation 94 forbids any illegal approach to the manager of another club. "If Leicester feel that there is a situation here to lodge an official complaint we would take up the matter on their behalf," he said.

Partnership dissolved . . . Mark McGhee (left) departs Filbert Street, leaving Martin George to express his anger

An everyday year in the life of ordinary football folk

1995

"We offered far too generous terms in a bid to swing the day. Our reaction that it was turned down is one of disbelief. As they haven't turned up for training today, it seems they don't intend to return."

Martin George, Leicester's chairman, Dec 7

"It would be nice to have the matter resolved tomorrow.'

Martin George, Dec 6

"I should have the right to hear what they have to say so that I can make my mind up. Wolves are a big, big club and if someone else took over and turned them into a major force in the Premiership, I would not want to be sitting around wondering what might have been."

Mark McGhee, Dec 4

"If Mark leaves, then so shall I."

Martin George, Dec 3

"I still have a big job to do with City. It is only half-way through and I intend to stick around to complete it.'

Mark McGhee, Dec 1

"Mark McGhee wants to stay with Leicester. He has already made that perfectly plain on a number of occasions.

Martin George, Dec 1

1994

"We shook hands on an agreement and drank champagne into the night celebrating the future of Reading with Mark and his wife."

Reading's chairman John Madejski *(explaining why he thought McGhee had rejected Leicester's offer to succeed Brian Little)*, **Dec 15**

"He's just trying to shift the blame and responsibility on to me. He could have kept us if he had rewarded us with a new contract after promotion last season. I'll admit that after talking with Madejski I agreed to stay. But when I woke up my gut feeling was that I had made the wrong decision. It's my life. My conscience is clear."

Mark McGhee, Dec 15 *(after finally agreeing to join Leicester)*.

"We are preparing information to send to the FA. We are not going to let the matter lie."

Martin George *(on the defection of Brian Little to Aston Villa)*, **Dec 5**

"I have tried to do things in a proper manner, but certain individuals are not allowing me to.

Brian Little, Dec 3

"When Little left he handed me a letter of resignation in which he stated that he would not be Aston Villa's next manager. Two days later we received another letter in which he stated it had been for 'personal reasons'. The whole thing stinks.'

Martin George, Dec 2 *(after Little walked out)*

Hereford and Brazil home of soccer's best

Frank Keating

THE scorer of the World Cup's finest goal dropped in to town this week, by fluke on the very day that Hereford United were drawn in the FA Cup against the comparatively high-flying and haughty Hotspurs. There is a connection, too, a palpable link.

A quarter of a century on, Carlos Alberto, captain of Brazil and scorer of that voluptuous curtain-call goal at the end of the 1970 final against Italy in Mexico City, is in prosperous good shape, full of the joys, and in the trim. He passed through London to film for the hoorayingly inimitable BBC2 series Fantasy Football League, which comically clatters down the tunnel to begin its new series on December 22. The great man stars with the programme's ubiquitous butt Jeff Astle, which is like asking Lester to kick home the winner in the Donkey Derby.

The vivid image of Carlos Alberto's eruptively emphatic score, which sealed Brazil's victory by 4–1, has ever since been lodged in the souls and spirits of those of a certain generation as the very best of the bunch, and the certainty of its place atop the pantheon was confirmed in the recent poll on BSkyB television which also pronounced it the World Cup's best of the best.

THE once straight-backed defender with the puma's stride remembers the goal, of course he does. Clodoaldo's compelling dribble out of defence, Jairzinho's take and turn and caressing pass to Pele, mid-pitch inside-left and 25 yards from goal . . . but as the Italian defence bristled en masse behind its sandbags, Pele does not run at them but senses the express thundering through the station on his right and, like a meticulous carpet-bowler, serenely rolls the ball into its path.

Carlos Alberto, at full steam ahead, has no need minutely to alter stride or direction as his instep convulsively meets the ball and in a blink the missile is nestling in the netting behind the ambushed and astonished Italian goalkeeper.

Was it, for Carlos Alberto as well, the best ever? "The best ever? There were so many. Well, I played 11 years with Pele at Santos. You cannot pick just one as the best among so many."

He remembers the finest match of those epic finals being Brazil's narrow win over England, "although a few days later, for the first half-hour against Romania, we were playing so beautifully we looked at each other with wide-open eyes, saying 'Wow! Isn't this great'. After that, although we won 3–2, we played like shite, like manure."

Which latter could be a reason Hereford United (with its dinky ground alongside the cattle market) muscle in on the conversation. But it isn't. The link is another poll, the best televised goal of the FA Cup. The winner fulminated from some fuzzy faraway footage on a glistening mud-slurp winter afternoon at rustic Edgar Steet, two years and a million miles from Mexico's midsummer sun and colour and Carlos Alberto.

HEREFORD were in the Southern League in 1972 when Newcastle United swaggered down for the Cup. Their stripey strut stopped when, late on, Ronnie Radford's 40-yard screamer billowed the Newcastle net. Hereford presented Radford with a rose-bowl as thanks for the goal, and he still keeps it in pride of place in his Leeds home. He is 51 now, and a joiner.

"Apart from the rose-bowl, the warmest recollections are still all in my mind," he says. "In midfield, I pushed the ball through to Brian [Owen], and when he gave it back I thought 'ooh aye'. I always liked a sudden dig. No rhyme nor reason to it when your instinct sniffs a chance, is there? You don't think about it, nor look up to 'place' it. Just head down and good contact. If it's 'on' and you can see them white sticks, then have a go at getting it between them.

"Mind you, down the years quite a few screamed over the bar that I hit from far out just as well. Okay, almost as well. That day I just caught it perfect. It flew in — but it only became famous because the telly was there."

And still they fly in, by the netful and from all round the world. Only yesterday the Australian Damian Mori, playing for Adelaide City against Sydney United, claimed he had equalled the record for the fastest goal — four seconds from kick-off, set by Jim Fryatt of Bradford Park Avenue 21 years ago.

Still they fly in . . . but none so savoured as Carlos Alberto's — nor, come to that, Ronnie Radford's.

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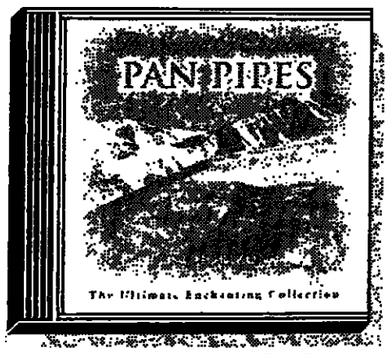

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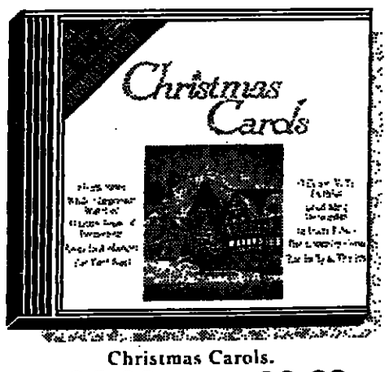

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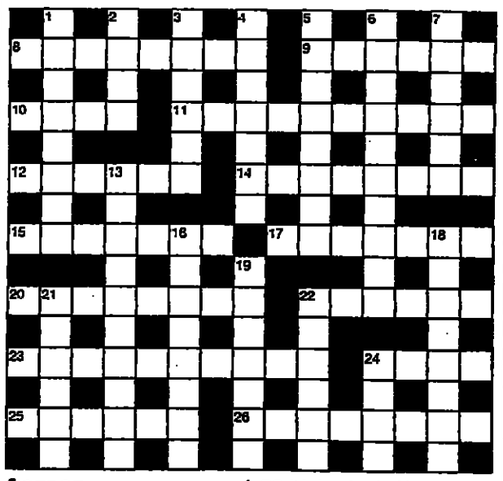
Review page 3

Guardian Crossword No 20,519

Set by Rufus

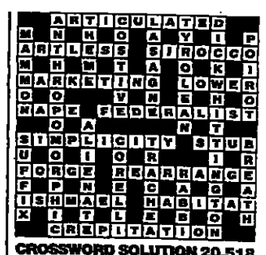


Across

8 To surpass score is excellent (3-5)
9 Freezes dessert to eat later (4,2)
10 An island heaven, it's said (4)
11 Sign for a missing letter (10)
12 Selected the Japanese name for Korea (6)
14 He's bound to better himself elsewhere (8)
15 Pacify monkey, feeding it vegetables (7)
17 Chaos caused by novice in boat (7)
20 One's time of arrival (8)
22 Dry hill region (6)
23 Slump causing gloom (10)
24 Prepare to put out with the turn of the tide (4)
25 Oral entreaties find favour (6)
26 It is involved with change in education (8)

Down

1 Titles count for a great deal here (8)
2 Supporter of proposal (4)
3 Family stress (6)
4 More the sort of thing maths students deal with (7)
5 Faulty hearing of one caught in cold wind (8)
6 Comrade is disturbed by nervous reaction from American party (10)
7 Badly hurt in Welsh town (5)
13 Loud note, strain to get it (10)
16 Avoid a tackle from the team and stride on (8)
18 Antoine's inordinately privileged pupils (8)
19 Their work is somewhat mechanical, but character-forming (7)
21 Eccentric ladies highly thought of (6)
22 Relaxing period of warm and bright weather? (6)
24 Reflection of one's own outspoken views (4)



CROSSWORD SOLUTION 20,518

Solution tomorrow

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London: Telephone 0171-278 2332. Telex 8811746 (Guard G). Fax 0171-837 2114; 0171-833 8342. Telephone sales 0171-611 9000
Manchester: Tel 0161-832 7200. Fax 0161-832 5851/834 9717. Tel sales 0161-834 8686

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